

HOME FOR REFUGEES: A CASE STUDY IN COMMUNITY SPONSORSHIP

by

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Certification Page

Certified, that the work contained herein is my own, except where noted and cited.

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Certified, that the work contained herein has been conducted ethically, within the parameters of the institutional review process, to the best of our knowledge, and is appropriate for the fulfillment of the objectives of the Doctor of Theology dissertation.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to:

Scott, my most enthusiastic encourager,

Anna,

Justin and Lydia

&

Diann and Jack McCormick

I am thankful for all the ways that we are home to one another.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CSH	Community Sponsorship Hub
CWS	Church World Services
DHS	Department of Homeland Security
DPA	Displaced Persons Act
GRSI	Global Refugee Sponsorship Initiative
HFR	Home for Refugees
IOI	UK Home Office's Indicators of Integration Framework
IRC	International Rescue Committee
IRIS	Integrated Refugee and Immigrant Services
IILA	International Institute of Los Angeles
LIRS	Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service
M.A.	Master Agreement
MCC	Mennonite Central Committee
MCCC	Mennonite Central Committee of Canada
NAE	National Association of Evangelicals
OCJCR	Orange County Jewish Coalition for Refugee
ORR	Office of Refugee Resettlement
PRM	State Department's Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration
PSRP	Canadian Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program
SAH	Sponsorship Agreement Holders
SIV	Special Immigrant Visa

WHO	World Health Organization
USCRI	US Committee for Refugees and Immigrants
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

GLOSSARY

Asylum is a form of protection provided to noncitizens physically present in the United States who meet the definition of refugee and are not otherwise barred from applying for or receiving asylum.¹

Community Sponsorship involves community or private groups providing mentorship, assistance, and some level of financial or in-kind support to refugees, whether they have entered through resettlement or applied for and received asylum after arrival.”²

Community Sponsorship Hub is an organization in the US dedicated to growing community sponsorship.

Humanitarian parole is authorized for "urgent humanitarian reasons" as specified by law, regulation, or declaration by the US Government.³

Operation Allies Welcome was the effort to support vulnerable Afghans as they resettled in the US. The evacuation was the largest carried out by the US since the Vietnam war.⁴

Push and Pull factors in the study of migration are those factors that encourage a person to leave home or be drawn to an area or place.

The **Refugee Act of 1980** raised the annual ceiling for refugees from 17,400 to 50,000, created a process for reviewing and adjusting the refugee ceiling to meet emergencies, and required annual consultation between Congress and the President.⁵

A **Refugee** is someone who is unable or unwilling to return to their country of origin owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion.”⁶

¹ Department of Homeland Security, “Reporting Terminology and Definitions,” Accessed April 11, 2023, www.dhs.gov/immigration-statistics/reporting-terminology-definitions.

² Susan Fratzke, 2017, “Engaging Communities in Refugee Protection: The Potential of Private Sponsorship in Europe,” Brussels: Migration Policy Institute. www.migrationpolicy.org/sites/default/files/publications/PrivateSponsorshipEurope-Fratzke_FINALWEB.pdf

³ Department of Homeland Security, “Reporting Terminology and Definitions.”

⁴ James McBride, “Afghanistan, Iraq, Vietnam: How the U.S. Has Resettled Its Wartime Allies,” Council on Foreign Relations, September 28, 2021, Accessed February 23, 2023. www.cfr.org/in-brief/afghanistan-iraq-vietnam-how-us-has-resettled-its-wartime-allies.

⁵ National Archives Foundation, “Refugee Act of 1980,” Accessed April 11, 2023, www.archivesfoundation.org/documents/refugee-act-1980/.

⁶ UN General Assembly, “Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees,” July 28, 1951, Article 1 (A), Vol. 189, Accessed April 7, 2022, www.refworld.org/docid/3be01b964.html.

The **Refugee Ceiling** is the number of refugees who may be admitted each year to the US. The number is established by the President in consultation with Congress.

Refugee resettlement is the transfer of refugees from the country in which they have sought protection to another State that has agreed to admit them as refugees with permanent residence status.”⁷

Special Immigrant Visas are issued by a consular officer outside of the United States to a person eligible to immigrate to the United States to become a lawful permanent resident.⁸ Many Afghans were issued SIVs due to their aid of the US government and NATO missions.

Sponsor Circle Program for Afghans, launched in October of 2021, enabled groups of individuals to form sponsor circles to provide initial resettlement assistance to Afghans who had been relocated to the United States under Operation Allies Welcome.⁹

Uniting for Ukraine, launched in April of 2022, was a pathway for Ukrainian citizens and their immediate family members to come to the US and stay temporarily in a 2-year period of parole. Ukrainians participating in Uniting for Ukraine must have a supporter in the US who agrees to provide them with financial support for the duration of their stay.¹⁰

Welcome.us is a non-profit initiative of Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors that initially focused on catalyzing support for arriving Afghans, then expanded to Ukrainians. It is the private partner of the US government in sponsorship. HFR received grants from welcome.us that funded coaching of sponsor circles.

World Relief is the humanitarian arm of the National Association of Evangelicals.

A **zero tolerance policy** was implemented in May of 2018 at the US/Mexico border¹¹ and led to the separation of an estimated 3,014 children from their parents while the policy was in place. Though US Customs and Border Protection adopted ad hoc methods to record and track separations, there were widespread errors.

⁷ International Organization for Migration. “Glossary on Migration.” Accessed April 8, 2022, https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/iml_34_glossary.pdf, 184.

⁸ Department of Homeland Security, “Reporting Terminology and Definitions.”

⁹ U.S. Department of State, “Launch of the Sponsor Circle Program for Afghans,” *October 25, 2021*. Accessed April 11, 2023, www.state.gov/launch-of-the-sponsor-circle-program-for-afghans/.

¹⁰ U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, *Uniting for Ukraine*, Accessed April 11, 2023, www.uscis.gov/ukraine.

¹¹ U.S. Department of Justice, Attorney General Announces Zero-Tolerance Policy for Criminal Illegal Entry, April 6, 2018, Accessed April 11, 2023, www.justice.gov/opa/pr/attorney-general-announces-zero-tolerance-policy-criminal-illegal-entry.

Prologue

When a foreigner resides among you in your land, do not mistreat them. The foreigner residing among you must be treated as your native-born. Love them as yourself, for you were foreigners in Egypt. I am the Lord your God.

Lev. 19:33-34 (New International Version)

Just the thought of having to be forced from my home...how traumatic that would be, and how beneficial it would be to have a welcoming team to help to welcome me into a new country.”

Minda Schweizer, Founder of Home for Refugees¹²

The plane lands.

A family of five deplanes and follows the other passengers to customs where, after verifying their papers and passports, the security officer says, “Welcome to the United States.” The parents look at one another, a look that holds relief and hopefulness. So much time and work went into the vetting process, but now it is official. They have been granted asylum in the US after fleeing Afghanistan.

They follow the arrows and the signs and wait for their bags in baggage claim. They don’t have much. When they left, they were in a hurry, and those items that were necessary to their lives before will be of little use here. They’ve been told that they will be met at the airport, that there is a place for them to go, an apartment. With their two bags in hand, clutching the hands of their children, they walk towards the automatic doors.

¹² Minda Schweizer and Austin, interview with author, Zoom, March 2, 2022.

On the other side of the doors, a small group watches closely as passengers come out of baggage claim. One of the adults has a sign with the family's name on it. Two children hold poster boards. One says, "Welcome home!" with a red heart in place of the *o* in home, and the other, "We love our new neighbors!" The group members have gotten to know each other as they've prepared for this moment. It began with concern and conversations about current events, the American military withdrawal from Afghanistan, and a desire to help.

Months ago, Home for Refugees (HFR) announced online informational meetings on Facebook about forming teams to support Afghan allies who were evacuated after the fall of Kabul. One of the group attended, talked with friends, and made an announcement at her church. After weeks of shared meals and discussion, six committed to form a Home Team through HFR. They submitted paperwork and attended training while talking with people in their community who were willing to help. They raised money and hunted for an apartment. Each team member had a designated role for the next year—an adult job coach, a health advocate, financial coach, adult conversation partner, and a child education advocate.

The automatic door opens. Someone says, "Welcome home." And even if the English phrase is not understood, the welcoming smiles say enough.

Chapter One

The opening story is a composite of the experiences of those who have walked alongside newcomers¹³ resettling in the US during their first year in America through HFR, a faith-based 501c3 located in Irvine, California. Founded by Minda Schweizer in 2017, HFR's purpose is to "help relieve the tragedy of displacement and loss for families and individuals having to leave a place they once called home and help them regain independent and self-sufficient living as they create their new home in the United States."¹⁴ They do this by recruiting, training, and coaching volunteers who accompany newcomer families and individuals during their first year of resettlement.

HFR was initially founded to support refugees coming through resettlement agencies located in Southern California. In 2019, HFR began working with teams across the US to sponsor asylum-seeking families from Central America who were admitted to the US to be reunited with their children in the aftermath of the 2018 zero tolerance policy at the US/Mexico border. In the fall of 2021, in response to the need to resettle large numbers of Afghans, HFR

¹³ For the purpose of this thesis, those who have Home Teams working with them as they make their home in the US. will be called newcomers unless the naming of their immigration status is necessary. All have been granted entry to the US under a protected status, whether as refugees, asylees, asylum seekers, humanitarian parolees, or holders of Special Immigrant Visas.

¹⁴ "At a Glance: Mission and Vision," Home for Refugees, Accessed April 13, 2022, <https://www.homeforrefugeesusa.org>.

supported the majority of Sponsor Circles, a nationwide program initiated through the State Department and the Community Sponsorship Hub (CSH).¹⁵

HFR's Home Teams are a part of the larger movement of community sponsorship, which involves "community or private groups providing mentorship, assistance, and some level of financial or in-kind support to refugees, whether they have entered through resettlement or applied for and received asylum after arrival."¹⁶ The Migration Policy Institute's policy brief, "Engaging Communities in Refugee Protection: The Potential of Private Sponsorship in Europe" stated the potential benefits of private involvement in resettlement,

By involving community members directly in the process of welcoming refugees, sponsorship has the potential to build stronger relationships between refugees and receiving communities and to improve refugee integration outcomes. Sponsorship may also grant communities a sense of ownership over the immigration and humanitarian channels that are shaping their societies. Finally, where sponsored refugees are admitted over and above government resettlement quotas, such schemes can provide an additional pathway to safety for refugees who would otherwise have been excluded from traditional resettlement.¹⁷

This research aims to study the development and practice of HFR's Home Teams from 2017 to 2022 through a case study approach to encourage the church's involvement in the practice and expansion of community sponsorship in the United States. HFR has adapted and worked through many variables in its first five years, resettlement programs, non-profits, and community groups involved in community and private sponsorship can learn from the ways HFR has supported the welcome of newcomers by equipping volunteers. This chapter introduces the

¹⁵ U.S. Department of State, "Launch of the Sponsor Circle Program for Afghans," October 25, 2022, Accessed April 8, 2022, <https://www.state.gov/launch-of-the-sponsor-circle-program-for-afghans>.

¹⁶ Susan Fratzke, 2017, "Engaging Communities in Refugee Protection: The Potential of Private Sponsorship in Europe," Brussels: Migration Policy Institute, www.migrationpolicy.org/sites/default/files/publications/PrivateSponsorshipEurope-Fratzke_FINALWEB.pdf.

¹⁷ Susan Fratzke. "Engaging Communities in Refugee Protection."

study by discussing the significance of the study of community sponsorship in the United States; by giving a brief overview of US immigration, resettlement, and community sponsorship, and ends with a description of key research, research questions, methodology, limitations and a structural outline of the dissertation.

Significance

In his book *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, John Swinton and Harriet Mowat define practical theology as the “critical, theological reflection on the practices of the Church as they interact with the practices of the world, with a view to ensuring and enabling faithful participation in God’s redemption practices, in, to and for the world.”¹⁸ In examining a practice of the church, in this case, hospitality towards newcomers to the US, a primary task is enabling and encouraging the faithfulness of individuals and communities as they participate in God’s continuing mission in the world in this time and place, 21st century America.¹⁹

“Hospitality is the fundamental gesture of God’s grace, the opening up of God’s household (oikos), his own triune life, to “strangers and aliens” (Eph. 2:10.).”²⁰ God commanded the people of Israel to show hospitality to the stranger in their midst because they had been strangers in Egypt (Deut. 10:19). The posture of hospitality was to be one of inclusion and love, treating the stranger as native-born because of God’s action of hospitality through the salvation of Israel out of Egypt (Lev.19:33-34). In the New Testament, Jesus’ parable of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10 and the generous host inviting the poor, lame, sick, and blind in Luke 14

¹⁸ John Swinton and Harriet Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, (London: SCM Press, 2006,) 7.

¹⁹ Swinton and Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, 263.

²⁰ Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Faith Speaking Understanding: Performing the Drama of Doctrine*, First edition, (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2014,) 158.

extend the image of welcome to include seeking out the other. The thread of hospitality to the stranger runs through the biblical narrative.

In her seminal work on hospitality, *Making Room: Recovering Hospitality as a Christian Tradition*, Christine Pohl writes,

Strangers, in the strict sense, are those who are disconnected from basic relationships that give persons a secure place in the world. The most vulnerable strangers are detached from family, community, church, work, and polity. This condition is most clearly seen in the state of homeless people or refugees.²¹

In an era where the hospitality industry provides places to stay and food to eat, and American infrastructure takes care of needs outside of the context of individual responsibility toward one another, we may not be faced with true strangers in our daily lives. Hospitality towards those who have become strangers as they resettle in the US calls us back to an early practice of God's people.

Within the American system of refugee resettlement, community sponsorship is an opportunity for the church to practice hospitality in a way that not only blesses those involved, but leads to stronger, flourishing communities. James Davison Hunter writes in, *To Change the World: The Irony, Tragedy, and Possibility of Christianity Today*,

Faithful presence in our spheres of influence does not imply passive conformity to the established structures. Rather, within the dialectic between affirmation and antithesis, faithful presence means a constructive resistance that seeks new patterns of social organization that challenge, undermine, and otherwise diminish oppression, injustice, enmity, and corruption and, in turn, encourage harmony, fruitfulness and abundance, wholeness, beauty, joy, security, and well-being.²²

²¹ Christine D. Pohl, *Making Room: Recovering Hospitality as a Christian Tradition*, (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans, 1999,) 13.

²² James Davison Hunter, *To Change the World: The Irony, Tragedy, and Possibility of Christianity in the Late Modern World*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010,) 247.

Hospitality through the practice of community sponsorship of immigrants is an example of the church being a faithful presence, of being a constructive resistance against division.

Fratzke and Dorst point out that sponsorship can “provide companionship and emotional and social support that extend beyond the scope of professional service providers—and that isolated newcomers desperately need.”²³ Yet, these volunteers require vetting, training, and ongoing coaching to be effective. They write that “volunteer and sponsorship programs that do not have adequate support run the risk of backfiring and providing poor-quality services to refugees or, in the worst cases, actually doing harm.”²⁴ Learning from HFR’s development and practice may aid resettlement programs, non-profits, churches, and groups who seek ways to better engage in the welcome of newcomers in a resettlement landscape that is ever-changing.

Our society’s individualism often influences how the church perceives calling and ministries of hospitality to the stranger. Individuals may feel called to act, volunteering or working through a nonprofit, but the act is often individual. Through group sponsorship of newcomers, done within the wider support of the church, communities embody hospitality to the stranger. The groups are not only volunteers, but have agency as they walk in relational ministry together. The interplay between individuals, teams, and an organization being called, bearing the cost, and experiencing the blessing of the practice of hospitality to newcomers may have implications for the response of the church to needs and the development of ministries of costly hospitality. Many churches support ministries involved in this kind of work, but perhaps in addition to engagement limited to financial support and occasional presence, missional groups could commit to learning together as they accompany those who may be seen as strangers.

²³ Susan Fratzke and Emma Dorst, *Volunteers and Sponsors: A Catalyst for Refugee Integration?* Migration Policy Institute, 2019, PDF, 1.

²⁴ Fratzke and Dorst, *Volunteers and Sponsors*, 1.

Community sponsorship is a growing movement around the world. This study adds to the body of knowledge about a practice that is being acted out in a variety of cultural settings and political and social realities. Given the wide variety of status and needs of newcomers that HFR has worked with and the nationwide placement of Home Teams, this study examines how it has adapted and worked throughout many variables, giving others involved in the growing sponsorship movement insight into how one organization has supported the welcome of newcomers by equipping volunteers.

A Brief Overview of US Immigration

The US was founded largely by those seeking economic opportunity as well as groups fleeing religious persecution, famine, and wars. Those who were already inhabitants were displaced. People from Africa were brought against their will and enslaved for generations. As the United States became a country and considered the role of immigration in its continued expansion, openness to immigrants and a desire to protect republican ideals were in tension. In 1783 George Washington addressed Irish immigrants with these words,

The bosom of America is open to receive not only the opulent and respectable stranger, but the oppressed and persecuted of all nations and religions, whom we shall welcome to participate in all of our rights and privileges, if by decency and propriety of conduct they appear to merit the employment.²⁵

In the beginning of the republic, immigration laws were largely left to the states, though a Federal 1790 law limited naturalization to free, white people of “good character” who had been in the U.S. for at least two years. The necessity of good character excluded convicts and paupers, and those who were too poor to pay the fees. A few years later, the Alien and Sedition Acts of

²⁵ Matthew Soerens and Jenny Hwang, *Welcoming the Stranger: Justice, Compassion & Truth in the Immigration Debate*, (Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP Books, 2009), 9.

1798 addressed fears around French immigrants and authorized the government to deport immigrants who were believed to be a danger to the United States.²⁶

By 1840, out of a population of seventeen million, there were about one million foreign-born in the United States. The nation was deeply Protestant, but homogeneity ended as steamships led to greater ease and cost of travel, and the push factors²⁷ of poverty and political instability in Ireland and Germany led hundreds of thousands to the US in the decades that followed. William Phalen writes,

In the 1840s... almost 800,000 immigrants arrived from Ireland; and in the 1850s, 952,000 came from Germany and 914,000 from Ireland. It is widely known, of course, that migration to America at the time of the Irish famine was very heavy. But it is seldom realized that proportionally, this was the heaviest influx of immigrants in American history... (with a) total of 2,939,000 immigrants in the decade between 1845 and 1854 ... this riptide of immigration between 1845 and 1854 struck with severe shock in a society with a very small proportion of foreign-born members.²⁸

The Irish were mostly Catholic, while the Germans were Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish.²⁹ In the summer of 1844, two week-long riots broke out between Irish Catholics and native-born Protestants near Philadelphia. Northern native-born citizens turned anti-immigrant and anti-Irish, and nativist political parties became a powerful force.

Immigration fell in 1855 mostly due to the outbreak of nativism and fell further during an economic downturn in 1857 and the outbreak of the Civil War. The first legal restriction by the US on immigration was the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 which suspended

²⁶ Brian N. Fry, *Nativism and Immigration: Regulating the American Dream, The New Americans*, (New York: LFB Scholarly Pub., 2007), 14.

²⁷ In the study of migration, push factors are those that encourage a person to leave home, pull factors are those that draw to an area or place.

²⁸ Phalen, William, *American Evangelical Protestantism and the European Immigrants, 1800–1924*. (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 2011), Kindle.

²⁹ Phalen, *American Evangelical Protestantism* Kindle.

almost all Chinese immigration and barring foreign-born Chinese from naturalizing.³⁰ By the mid-1860s, 50,000 Chinese immigrants lived on the West Coast. Many had arrived seeking economic opportunity during the Gold Rush and then finding work in the garment or farming industries. When white workers did not sign on in the numbers needed for building the Central Pacific section of the Transcontinental Railroad, up to 20,000 Chinese workers were recruited from the West Coast and China.³¹ Twenty-three million immigrants arrived between 1881 and 1920, more than had come over the previous three hundred years.³² Polish and Italian arrivals were Catholic peasant farmers who were no longer able to support their families and sought economic opportunity. Russian Jews were fleeing anti-Semitic violence and repression.

Recent Harvard graduates founded The Immigration Restriction League in 1894. Relying on new racial theories, they argued that the new immigrants were biologically inferior to the races that had populated America in the previous three centuries so would be unable to assimilate in American culture. In 1911, under pressure from the Immigration Restriction League and other nativist groups, the U.S. government published the Dillingham Commission report. The report explained that racial differences made the new immigrants biologically inferior to the old, and that “certain kinds of criminality are inherent in the Italian race.”³³

Though World War I slowed immigration levels from Europe, xenophobia was evidenced by the “anti-hyphenate campaign, the demand for 100% Americanism, the anti-German hysteria of the world war, the red scare of 1919-1920, the rebirth of the Ku Klux Klan, and a wave of

³⁰ The Act was repealed in 1943 when the US and China were allies during the Second World War.

³¹ Lesley Kennedy, “Building the Transcontinental Railroad: How 20,000 Chinese Immigrants Made it Happen,” History, Accessed April 24, 2023. www.history.com/news/transcontinental-railroad-chinese-immigrants.

³² Soerens and Hwang, *Welcoming the Stranger*, 39.

³³ Helene Stapinski, “When America Barred Italians,” *The New York Times*, June 2, 2017, Accessed August 17, 2020, www.nytimes.com/2017/06/02/opinion/illegal-immigration-italian-americans.html.

virulent anti-Semitism.”³⁴ Temporary restrictions on immigration were passed in 1921 and 1922, leading up to the permanent restrictions passed in 1924 that would redefine immigration to the US until the passage of the Nationality Act of 1952.³⁵

The Immigration Act of 1924 restricted entry to two percent of the total number of people of each nationality in America as of the 1890 national census—a system that favored immigrants from Western Europe and prohibited immigrants from Asia.³⁶ For the first time, a visa was now required to enter, issued from the U.S. Department of State.³⁷ The author of the act stated: "The myth of the melting pot has been discredited.... The day of unalloyed welcome to all peoples, the day of indiscriminate acceptance of all races, has definitely ended."³⁸ Between 1933 and 1944, for the first time in its history, the United States became a country of net emigration, as more people left the country than entered, and as Congress responded to negative public opinion.³⁹ A Fortune magazine survey in 1938 reported that 86% of Americans opposed increasing immigration quotas from German, Austrian, or other refugees.⁴⁰

³⁴ Phalen, *American Evangelical Protestantism* Kindle.

³⁵ Soerens and Hwang, *Welcoming the Stranger*, 48.

³⁶ History.com Editors, "U.S. Immigration before 1965," A&E Television Networks, October 29, 2009, Accessed August 17, 2020, www.history.com/topics/immigration/u-s-immigration-before-1965.

³⁷ Soerens and Hwang, *Welcoming the Stranger*, 50-52.

³⁸ Phalen, *American Evangelical Protestantism* Kindle.

³⁹ Deborah Anker, "U.S. Immigration and Asylum Policy: A Brief Historical Perspective," *Defense of the Alien* 13 (1990), Accessed April 6, 2022, www.jstor.org/stable/23143024.

⁴⁰ Daniel J. Tichenor, *Dividing Lines: The Politics of Immigration Control in America*. Princeton Studies in American Politics, (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2002), 161.

Resettlement

During World War II, Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish groups in the US organized and became advocates for the resettlement of refugees.⁴¹ Resettlement is defined by the International Organization of Migration (IOM) as “the transfer of refugees from the country in which they have sought protection to another State that has agreed to admit them... as refugees... with permanent residence status.”⁴² After the war, vast numbers of Europeans were unable to either return to their homes or settle locally.⁴³ Under a directive from President Harry Truman in 1945, these private humanitarian organizations acted as sponsors for refugees, covering the cost of resettlement for those who had an American relative.⁴⁴ In the Displaced Persons Act (DPA) of 1948,⁴⁵ organizations like Church World Services (CWS) paid the full cost of resettlement and were “responsible for assisting refugees with employment, housing, and other needs.”⁴⁶

Through the following decades, sponsoring families or organizations generally covered the cost of refugee resettlement. The Department of Health, Education, and Welfare first began providing grants from the government to aid organizations assisting in resettlement with Cuban asylum-seekers in the early 1960s and Indochinese refugees at the end of the Vietnam War.⁴⁷

⁴¹ Geoffrey Cameron, *Send Them Here: Religion, Politics, and Refugee Resettlement in North America*, McGill-Queen's refugee and forced migration studies 4, Kindle, Chapter 1.

⁴² *Glossary on Migration*. International Migration Law: International Organization for Migration, 2019, Accessed April 8, 2022, publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/iml_34_glossary.pdf, 184.

⁴³ Cameron, *Send Them Here*, Kindle, Introduction.

⁴⁴ Truman, Harry. "Statement and Directive on Displaced Persons," (New York Times), December 22, 1945, Accessed April 3, 2022, www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/president-truman-statement-and-directive-on-displaced-persons-december-1945.

⁴⁵ Cameron, *Send them Here*, Chapter 2.

⁴⁶ Jessica Eby, Erika Iverson, Jenifer Smyers, and Erol Kekic, "The Faith Community's Role in Refugee Resettlement in the United States," *Journal of Refugee Studies* 24, no. 3 (2011): 586-605.

⁴⁷ Charlotte J. Moore, Review of U.S. Refugee Resettlement Programs and Policies, Accessed April 7, 2022, eric.ed.gov/?q=charlotte+j.+moore&id=ED206779.

This laid the foundation for the Refugee Act of 1980 in which the United Nations' definition of refugee was adopted: "someone who is unable or unwilling to return to their country of origin owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion."⁴⁸

Since 1980, the US has co-funded the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) to review applications for refugee status in refugee camps. Those who are deemed most vulnerable, unlikely to return safely to their home, are referred to member nations for resettlement. The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) investigates applicants through a screening process. The number of refugees admitted each year, the refugee ceiling, is determined each year by a presidential directive, and refugees are admitted if they are eligible based on the quota for the year.

The Office of Refugee Resettlement partners with nine voluntary agencies who are contracted through the State Department's Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM) to coordinate travel and sponsor all resettled refugees.⁴⁹ Resettlement agencies have offices throughout the country and staff who provide case management and enroll newcomers in employment, educational, language, and social services.⁵⁰ The resettlement agencies are given a

⁴⁸ UN General Assembly, Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, July 28, 1951, Article 1 (A), Vol. 189, Accessed April 7, 2022, www.refworld.org/docid/3be01b964.html.

⁴⁹ The nine agencies are Church World Services (CWS), Ethiopian Community Development Council, Episcopal Migration Ministries, HIAS, International Rescue Committee (IRC), U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (USCRI), Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service (LIRS), U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops UNHCR USA, *US Resettlement Partners*, Accessed March 22, 2022, <https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/search?query=us%20resettlement%20partners>.

⁵⁰ U.S. Department of State, "Reception and Placement." Accessed March 22, 2022, <https://www.state.gov/refugee-admissions/reception-and-placement/>.

payment of \$2,375 per individual, of which \$1275 is used for direct needs of refugees by the PRM.⁵¹

One privately funded refugee program, the Private Sector Initiative, was created during the Reagan administration in 1986 to increase resettlement opportunities by allowing organizations to sponsor refugees. The program was allowed to end in 1996 as private sector organizations struggled to cover increasing medical costs, and the difficult enrollment process kept many groups from applying.

Following the terrorist attacks of 9/11, refugee resettlement was paused for three months while extra security measures were put in place. The additional screening, including in-person interviews, medical screening, and biometric data, are still in place today and have expanded the processing time to 18-24 months.⁵² Some security checks have a limited period of validity, so a delay in one vetting procedure potentially creates expired clearances.⁵³ This temporary pause in admissions led to setbacks for the resettlement agencies whose operations and funding relied on the funding for arrivals, so the State Department provided budget support to resettlement agencies that covered administrative costs and maintained resettlement operations so that infrastructure would stay in place for future arrivals.⁵⁴ By 2004, refugee arrivals began to increase, and arrivals stayed stable through 2016, with yearly ceilings set between 70,000 and 85,000. In 2016, the last year of the Obama administration, 84,994 refugees were admitted.

⁵¹U.S. Department of State, Accessed March 14, 2023.

⁵² National Immigration Forum, "Fact Sheet on Refugee Resettlement," 2020, Accessed April 7, 2022, <https://immigrationforum.org/article/fact-sheet-u-s-refugee-resettlement/>.

⁵³ Silva Mathema and Sofia Carratala, *Rebuilding the U.S. Refugee Program for the 21st Century*, Center for American Progress, 2020, Accessed April 8, 2022, <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/rebuilding-u-s-refugee-program-21st-century/>, 7.

⁵⁴ Carratala and Mathema, *Rebuilding the U.S. Refugee Program*, 8.

In a 2019 survey on attitudes towards immigration, Americans listed immigration among their top concerns, with deep disagreement over immigration policies and the impact of immigration on American society.⁵⁵ Sixty-seven percent of white evangelical Protestants perceived that “immigrants are invading our country and replacing our cultural and ethnic background.” The percentage among white mainline and Catholic was 51% and 50% respectively. Among all Americans, the percentage was 36%.

Immigration was a key issue leading to Donald Trump’s election as president, and in January of 2017, he signed an Executive Order, “Protecting the Nation from Terrorist Attacks by Foreign Nationals.”⁵⁶ The order shut down the US refugee program for 120 days while a review of screening mechanisms was made by the Secretary of State, Secretary of the DHS, and the Director of National Intelligence. In February of 2018, the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services changed its mission to eliminate the phrase describing the U.S. as “a Nation of Immigrants.”⁵⁷ In the following years, the Trump administration lowered the refugee ceiling each year, to a low of 11,814 in 2020, the lowest number of refugees admitted since

⁵⁵ “A Nation of Immigrants? Diverging Perceptions of Immigrants Increasingly Marking Partisan Divides,” *PRRI*, March 12, 2019, Accessed April 7, 2022, <https://www.prri.org/research/a-nation-of-immigrants-diverging-perceptions-of-immigrants-increasingly-marking-partisan-divides/>.

⁵⁶ Executive Office of the President, *Executive Order 13769 of January 27, 2017, Protecting the Nation from Foreign Terrorist Entry to the United States*, Federal Register, 2017, Accessed April 8, 2022, <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2017/02/01/2017-02281/protecting-the-nation-from-foreign-terrorist-entry-into-the-united-states>.

⁵⁷ Richard Gonzales, “America No Longer A 'Nation of Immigrants' USCIS Says,” *NPR*, February 22, 2018, Accessed on August 14, 2020, www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2018/02/22/588097749/america-no-longer-a-nation-of-immigrants-uscis-says.

1975.⁵⁸ Since 2017, resettlement agencies have closed or zeroed out 134 sites, reducing their capacity by 38%.⁵⁹

In February of 2021, President Biden made an Executive Order to rebuild the refugee resettlement program. Included was a charge to “enhance the capacity of the USRAP to welcome refugees by expanding the use of community sponsorship and co-sponsorship models by refugee resettlement agencies, and by entering into new public-private partnerships.”⁶⁰

After the US military withdrawal from Afghanistan and the fall of Kabul in 2021, more than 74,000 Afghans were resettled in the U.S. through Operation Welcome, with the commitment to support resettlement for up to 95,000 individuals entering the United States.⁶¹ A community sponsorship pathway outside of working through the nine resettlement agencies had been created to enable communities to resettle newcomers, Sponsor Circles.

HFR was the first to train and coach the new Sponsor Circles forming to welcome arriving Afghan families across the US. With its focus on training and coaching volunteers since 2017, HFR was uniquely positioned to train and coach groups in areas far from resettlement agencies where there was a desire to help but no previous pathway. During this time, HFRs Home Teams that worked with those resettled by local agencies, a co-sponsorship model, expanded across the US as well.

⁵⁸ “U.S. Annual Refugee Resettlement Ceilings and Number of Refugees Admitted, 1980-Present,” Migration Policy Institute, Accessed September 14, 2021, www.migrationpolicy.org/programs/data-hub/charts/us-annual-refugee-resettlement-ceilings-and-number-refugees-admitted-united.

⁵⁹ Carratala and Mathema, *Rebuilding the U.S. Refugee Program*, 11.

⁶⁰ Executive Office of the President, *Executive Order 14013 of February 04, 2021, Rebuilding and Enhancing Programs to Resettle Refugees and Planning for the Impact of Climate Change on Migration*. Federal Register, 2021, Accessed April 11, 2022, www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2021/02/04/executive-order-on-rebuilding-and-enhancing-programs-to-resettle-refugees-and-planning-for-the-impact-of-climate-change-on-migration/.

⁶¹ U.S. Department of State: Office of the Spokesperson “Afghanistan Relocation and Resettlement Update,” December 13, 2021, www.state.gov/afghanistan-relocation-and-resettlement-update/.

Community Sponsorship

Canada and the US are world leaders in refugee resettlement, and though their systems of resettlement both developed in the decades after WWII, they diverged. Both resettle refugees through government sponsored resettlement, but Canada also has a private community sponsorship program, in which groups of residents sponsor a refugee or refugee family for a year. Over 325,000 refugees have been resettled through the Canadian Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program (PSRP).⁶² Studies conducted show that sponsored refugees tend to “have higher employment rates and earnings, find permanent accommodations more quickly, learn the local language more quickly, and receive referrals to employment services more often and more quickly than government resettled refugees.”⁶³ The Global Refugee Sponsorship Initiative (GRSI), a partnership between the government of Canada, the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), and the Open Society Foundation formed in 2016 to share and promote the model around the world.⁶⁴ Sponsorship programs have begun in the U.K., Ireland, Australia, New Zealand, Germany, Spain, Italy, France, and Argentina.

Community sponsorship in Canada has been researched extensively since the founding of the program in 1979. The Global Refugee Sponsorship Initiative, the Giustra Foundation, and the University of Ottawa Refugee Hub provide information for the development of worldwide

⁶² Jennifer Hyndman et al, "Sustaining the Private Sponsorship of Resettled Refugees in Canada," *Frontiers in Human Dynamics* (2021): 1-13, Accessed April 8, 2022, www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fhumd.2021.625358/full.

⁶³ Tasha Stansbury, “Global Literature Synthesis Report: Refugee Sponsorship and Integration Outcomes,” University of Ottawa, 2021, refugeehub.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/Refugee-Sponsorship-and-Integration-Outcomes-Report-FINAL-2022.pdf.

⁶⁴ J. Bond and A. Kwadrans, (2019), “Resettling Refugees through Community Sponsorship: A Revolutionary Operational Approach Built on Traditional Legal Infrastructure,” *Refuge*, 35(2), 86–108. Accessed April 8, 2022, doi.org/10.7202/1064822ar.

sponsorship programs, including a 2021 report on worldwide programs, *Global Literature Synthesis Report: Refugee Sponsorship and Integration Outcomes*.⁶⁵

As US resettlement agencies have begun to develop more co-sponsorship programs, there are some articles and a few research studies on their experience. The Sponsor Circle Program is in its infancy, with articles available but no research. Community sponsorship in Canada, in practice since 1978, has been researched extensively. The movement is growing worldwide, leading to better relationships between communities and newcomers and potentially better integration outcomes when volunteers are trained and coached throughout the process.

Research Objectives and Questions

The research aim of this project, then, is to investigate the development and practice of Home for Refugees' Home Team program through a case study approach to encourage the church's involvement in the practice and expansion of community sponsorship in the United States.

The objectives of this study are to:

1. Investigate the experience of the recruiting, training, and coaching of individuals and groups involved in Home Teams through individual interviews with Home Team volunteers and HFR personnel.
2. Describe the development of HFR's current practice of recruiting, training and coaching volunteers through changes in resettlement policy and practice.

⁶⁵ University of Ottawa, 2021. *Global Literature Synthesis Report: Refugee Sponsorship and Integration Outcomes*. by Stansbury, Tasha, Accessed April 8, 2022, refugeehub.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/Refugee-Sponsorship-and-Integration-Outcomes-Report-FINAL-2022.pdf.

3. Publish findings to encourage and inform this community-based model of the practice of hospitality with newcomers to the US in the church, community groups, non-profits, and resettlement programs.

Research questions

1. What external and internal factors led to HFR's current model of training, and coaching?
2. How did HFR's recruiting, training, and coaching adapt to its current practice?
3. How do Home Team volunteers and HFR staff experience the recruiting, training, and coaching process?
4. What challenges do the home teams face and how does HFR aid them?
5. What is the interplay between individuals, teams, and an organization being called, bearing the cost, and experiencing the blessing of the practice of hospitality to newcomers?

Methodology

Research of the practice of hospitality through HFR's home teams calls for qualitative research. Qualitative research involves using a "variety of methods and approaches which enable the researcher to explore the social world in an attempt to access and understand the unique ways that individuals and communities inhabit it."⁶⁶ The final written report or presentation includes the voices of participants, the reflexivity of the researcher, a complex description and interpretation of the problem, and its contribution to the literature or a call for change.⁶⁷

⁶⁶ Swinton and Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, 29.

⁶⁷ John W. Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing among Five Approaches*, (Los Angeles: SAGE Publications, 2013), 44.

Within qualitative research approaches, a case study is “a situational analysis where a particular event, process, or setting is studied from the viewpoint of all key stakeholders”⁶⁸ This approach allows for an examination of HFR as an organization as well as the experience of volunteers and staff. Data was collected through a survey of those who have participated in or were currently Home Team or Sponsor Circle volunteers, interviews with HFR personnel and volunteers, artifacts (pictures, Workplace streams, newsletters, social media feeds, and promotional materials). The process was iterative, with an openness to adaptation as information was collected. A detailed description of methodology and limitations of this research follows in Chapter 3.

Structure of Dissertation

This first chapter is an introduction to the study. Chapter Two is a literature review with assessment on the current state of scholarship on community sponsorship in the US. Chapter Three is a description of research methods, including design, participants, timeline, and data collection. Chapter Four and Five are Result Sections, with Chapter Four exploring the founding and development of HFR’s sponsorship program and Chapter Five providing a narrative of two home teams and then exploring the perspectives of HFR staff and volunteers on recruitment, training, and coaching. Chapter Six concludes with an analysis and discussion of the findings along with recommendations and suggestions for further study.

⁶⁸ Felice D. Billups, *Qualitative Data Collection Tools: Design, Development, and Applications*. *Qualitative Research Methods Series*, vol. volume 55. (Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications, Inc, 2021), 6.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

The aim of this literature review is to set the following case study of HFR's development and practice of Home Teams within the broader context of a Christian theology of hospitality and the development and practice of community sponsorship. This review is in two sections, with the wider theology of hospitality in Section One providing the framework for the specific practice of community sponsorship in Section Two as a hospitable practice of the church.

A Theology of Hospitality

Section One offers a theology of hospitality through the Biblical tradition, the practices of the early church, theological anthropology, and political theology along with my story. My Christian faith began when I received the welcome of God through the church as a teenager. It has grown in places where I have lived and worked outside my own culture over nineteen years in the French-speaking world in Gabon, Africa and France. Experiencing the welcome of God and being a part of the household of God is the foundation and motivation for my work on hospitality.

I read Christian authors addressing the theme of hospitality to the stranger. After defining hospitality from a biblical perspective, this review examines the relationship between God and his people, Israel, in the Old Testament, where God is the divine host to his people as He saves them from exile and gives them a home. We then turn to the New Testament and see how the Gospel writers often showed Jesus as both host and guest. Throughout scripture, in the Old and

New Testaments, the people of God are called to welcome the stranger. After a brief overview of hospitality in the church, this section moves to broader issues pertaining to hospitality in Christian anthropology and political theology.

Defining Hospitality

Christian hospitality begins with God. He provides creation for all and then offers up his household, *oikos*, his own triune life, through the cross of Christ to offer a home to “strangers and aliens” (Eph. 2:19). A Biblical definition of a stranger goes beyond an unknown person. Christine Pohl describes strangers as those without a place, detached from family, work, polity, and religious institutions.⁶⁹ In the ancient world, strangers (*gerim* in Hebrew), were often grouped with the poor, the widow, and the fatherless. They were displaced from the land, whether by war, famine, or other hardships. Having no legal rights, they were dependent on the protection of local rulers and often sold their labor cheaply, easily slipping into debt and slavery.⁷⁰ A Babylonian proverb stated the reality for them in the ancient world, “A resident alien in another city is a slave.”⁷¹ Easy targets for oppression,⁷² a stranger’s well-being depended on their welcome into the life of the community.⁷³

Philoxenia, the Greek word for hospitality in the New Testament, is a combination of *philo*, the word for the love and affection for those connected by family or faith and *xenos*, the

⁶⁹ Christine D. Pohl, 1999, *Making Room: Recovering Hospitality as a Christian Tradition*, Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans, 87.

⁷⁰ Raymond Westbrook, Bruce Wells, and Rachel F. Magdalene, 2009, *Law from the Tigris to the Tiber:: The Writings of Raymond Westbrook*, 2 vols. Winona Lake, Ind: Eisenbrauns, 171.

⁷¹ Westbrook, Wells, and Magdalene, *Law from the Tigris to the Tiber*, 171.

⁷² Mark R. Glanville, Luke Glanville, and Matthew Soerens, 2021, *Refuge Reimagined: Biblical Kinship in Global Politics*, Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, An imprint of InterVarsity Press, 26, 28.

⁷³ Pohl, *Making Room*, 28.

word for stranger.⁷⁴ Within the Christian tradition, hospitality responds to the physical, social, and spiritual needs by welcoming the stranger into a circle of love and care.⁷⁵ A space of safety and welcome is created in the hope that those who were alienated, at enmity, or unknown to one another become friends.⁷⁶ Whether temporary travelers who need care while passing through, or those putting down roots in a new place, strangers become hosts and guests, friends and family.

Old Testament

Throughout the Old Testament, God extended hospitality to the stranger as the divine host to his people, the Israelites. When his people were enslaved in Egypt, God rescued them and provided manna, quail, and living water as they journeyed to the promised land (Ex. 15, 16). He granted Israel the land as “aliens and tenants” (Lev. 25:23). He is the source of nourishment and peace for the Psalmist throughout Psalm 23, from the image of the shepherd leading his sheep to green pastures and still waters to the host laying a table for the guest. The banquet feast between God and his people in Isaiah 25:6-9 is the promised ultimate act of salvation as God shares his presence with all peoples.⁷⁷

In the ancient Near East, people traveled for survival, to flee from persecution or famine.⁷⁸ They faced dangers on the road along with the difficulty of finding food, drink, and safe lodging.⁷⁹ Across ancient cultures, there was a duty to feed, shelter, and protect travelers for

⁷⁴ Pohl, *Making Room*, 31.

⁷⁵ Amy Oden, 2001, *And You Welcomed Me: A Sourcebook on Hospitality in Early Christianity*, Nashville: Abingdon Press, 14.

⁷⁶ Joshua W. Jipp, 2017, *Saved by Faith and Hospitality*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2.

⁷⁷ Jipp, *Saved by Faith and Hospitality*, 19.

⁷⁸ Janzen, Waldemar, 1994, *Old Testament Ethics: A Paradigmatic Approach*, 1st ed. Louisville, Ky.: Westminster/John Knox Press, 43.

⁷⁹ Carroll R. M. Daniel, 2008, *Christians at the Border: Immigration, the Church, and the Bible*, Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 76.

short periods of time. For example, in ancient Greece, travelers were seen as helpless and under the protection of Zeus or as gods assuming human likeness in the form of a stranger.⁸⁰

The differences in the hospitality to the stranger offered by God's people were motivation and position as well as care for the permanent resident, which was not a duty in other ancient cultures. God's command for the Israelites to not oppress the stranger was based on their status as strangers who had experienced God's acts of hospitality, saving them from their position as oppressed aliens in the land of Egypt (Lev. 19: 33-34). Their hospitality was to go beyond a cultural duty; God's people were called to love their neighbor, the alien, as their very selves (Lev. 19:18, 34).⁸¹

In Deuteronomy 10:1-19, God's love for Israel is linked to his love for the stranger and Israel's love for the stranger.⁸² The word for love, *ahav*, is used to express covenant commitments, kinship, and an emotional connection.⁸³ Emotional attachments of a kinship relationship are the image for strangers being welcomed by the people of God.⁸⁴

Unexpected blessings often followed welcome in scripture. Abraham and Sarah's welcome of strangers led to the promised birth of Isaac, extending the blessing of hospitality beyond themselves (Gen. 18:1-15).⁸⁵ Rahab welcomed and protected the spies from Joshua's

⁸⁰ Gray, Louis H, John A. Selbie, and James Hastings, *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, Vol. 6. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, vol. 6, 808-810.

⁸¹ Pohl, *Making Room*, 28.

⁸² Glanville, M. Glanville, L., and Soerens, *Refuge Reimagined*, 42.

⁸³ Glanville, M. Glanville, L., and Soerens, *Refuge Reimagined*, 42.

⁸⁴ Glanville, M. Glanville, L., and Soerens, *Refuge Reimagined*, 43.

⁸⁵ Oden, *And You Welcomed Me*, 16.

army and received blessing and salvation for her family (Josh. 2). The widow cared for Elijah and received food for her family and her son back from the dead (1 Kings 17:8-24).

In his work, *Old Testament Ethics and the People of God*, Christopher Wright discusses the law as the path for Israel to be a light to the nations.⁸⁶ As a priesthood for the nations, the social shape of Israel provided a paradigm intended for relevance beyond its particular geographical, historical, and cultural context.⁸⁷ How Israel was to live out a culture of hospitality to those seeking refuge reflected the compassion and mercy of God in its own time and place and is a paradigm for welcome as we move to hospitality in the New Testament.

New Testament

Jesus as Stranger and Guest

Throughout the Gospels, Jesus embodies the hospitality of God among the tribes of Israel and the Gentiles as He takes on the role of stranger, guest, and host, often changing roles within a conversation. In his first miracle at the wedding in Cana, Jesus is the guest who becomes the secret host when He turns water to wine. With the Samaritan woman at the well, he begins as a thirsty guest who then reveals himself to be the source of eternal, living water. Jesus invites himself to be the guest of Zacchaeus, a tax collector, who then received God's hospitality as Jesus declares, "Today salvation has come to this house" (Luke 19:9). Throughout the Gospels, those who welcome Jesus and demonstrate hospitality to him and his disciples receive salvation, a welcome into the Kingdom of God as the People of God.⁸⁸

⁸⁶ Christopher J.H. Wright, 2004, *Old Testament Ethics for the People of God*, Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 64.

⁸⁷ Wright, *Old Testament Ethics*, 61.

⁸⁸ Jipp, *Saved by Faith and Hospitality*, 6.

In Luke 7:36-50, Jesus is a guest at the home of a Pharisee but only receives true hospitality from an uninvited woman who is known as a sinner. Washing the feet of Jesus with her tears and anointing them with oil, she offers Jesus a generous and repentant hospitality. The woman then receives the abundant welcome of God as her sins are forgiven and she is given a new label within the community.⁸⁹

Jesus sends out 72 of his disciples to follow his model of vulnerability and dependence on others. They are to journey without staff, bags, bread, money, or extra clothing, reliant on the hospitality of others (Luke 9:1-6). When they are welcomed as guests, they bring the hospitality of God through healing the sick and bringing the good news (Luke 9:6).⁹⁰

In the Gospel of John, the crowds ask Jesus for a sign, “What sign are you going to give us then, so that we may see it and believe in you... our ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, ‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat (John 6:30-31). This question comes the day after Jesus hosted them when He fed five thousand on a grassy place, an echo of the green pastures in Psalm 23. Jesus responds that He is the Bread of Life, but unlike the manna in the desert, He is the Bread that will never perish. He is an eternal source of nourishment, the eternal host and provider for his people.⁹¹

The night before his crucifixion, Jesus takes off his robe, ties a towel around himself, pours a basin of water, and washes the disciples’ feet during their final meal together. His final action towards his disciples before the cross is as a servant host to his guests (John 13:1-11). And

⁸⁹ Brendan Byrne, *The Hospitality of God: A Reading of Luke's Gospel*, (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 2000).

⁹⁰ Byrne, *The Hospitality of God*, 83.

⁹¹ Jipp, *Saved by Faith and Hospitality*, 86.

then, through the cross and resurrection, Jesus opens the way for his disciples and future believers to become not only guests, but friends and family.⁹²

In the Lord's Supper, the cost of welcome, Christ's broken body, is remembered and celebrated. He is the host who extends the hospitality of God to the stranger, drawing us into communion, and He is the meal, the bread and the wine. Communion both anticipates and reveals God's heavenly table where guests are nourished and experience the welcome of God.⁹³

Call to Welcome the Stranger

In Matthew 25, Jesus identifies the welcome of the hungry and thirsty, the stranger and the prisoner, with a welcome of himself.

Then the king will say to those at his right hand, Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world, 35 for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me... 'Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did it to me.' Matt. 25:31-46

This passage has been interpreted and applied as referring to anyone in need as well as a more limited scope of Christian missionaries and apostles or suffering Christians, but it converges with Biblical tradition that calls for responsibility towards the stranger. For early church writers,

to enter into God is to let oneself be caught up in the immense movement of the love of the Trinity which reveals the other person to us as 'neighbor' of others. And to become a 'neighbor' is to side with Christ, since he identifies himself with every human being who is suffering, or rejected, or imprisoned, or ignored... The love which is agape discovers that each individual, and especially each one who is suffering, is a sacrament of Christ, 'another Christ,' as St John Chrysostom says.⁹⁴

⁹² Jipp, *Saved by Faith and Hospitality*, 89.

⁹³ Pohl, Christine D. 2012, *Living into Community: Cultivating Practices That Sustain Us*, Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 30.

⁹⁴ Olivier Clément, 2013, *The Roots of Christian Mysticism: Texts from the Patristic Era with Commentary*, 2nd edition, ed. Hyde Park, New York: New City Press of the Focolare, 271 and 272.

Jerome wrote to clergy in 394 A.D., “Let poor men and strangers be acquainted with your modest table, and with them Christ shall be your guest.”⁹⁵ The mystery of Matthew 25 is that in loving our neighbor, we are not only following the way of Jesus, but we are welcoming God.

In the parable of the Good Samaritan, Jesus responds to the lawyer asking, “Who is my neighbor?” (v.29) with a depiction of a despised alien who breaks through ethnic and religious lines in his care for the wounded traveler. Jesus shifts the conversation from who the lawyer is obligated to see as a neighbor to a picture of generous, extravagant care to those in need.⁹⁶

Jesus gives instructions on this kind of extravagant hospitality to the stranger when He is a guest at the home of a Pharisee,

When you give a luncheon or a dinner, do not invite your friends or your brothers and sisters or your relatives or rich neighbors, in case they may invite you in return, and you would be repaid. But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind. And you will be blessed because they cannot repay you, for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous” (Luke 14:7-14).

By inviting those in who, on the surface, have nothing to offer, hosts anticipate and reflect God’s welcome and are welcomed into the eternal hospitality of God.⁹⁷

New Testament letters show the importance of hospitality in the early church. Paul urges the Romans to “share with the saints in their needs, pursue hospitality” (Rom. 12:13). Hospitality is a qualification for leadership in the church in Titus 1:8 and 1 Timothy 3:2. The author of Hebrews urges them to not neglect hospitality (Heb. 13:2), and Peter calls the church to offer hospitality ungrudgingly (1 Pet. 4:9). From shared meals where the church worked through

⁹⁵ Oden, *And You Welcomed Me*, 67.

⁹⁶ Byrne, *The Hospitality of God*, 95.

⁹⁷ Pohl, *Making Room*, 21.

divisions of Jew and Gentile, rich and poor, to the welcome of traveling ministers and persecuted Christians, the Gospel was demonstrated through the practice of hospitality.⁹⁸

Hospitality in the Church

In the fourth century, the church underwent a radical transformation as Christianity was adopted by Constantine as the religion of the Empire. Public resources flowed into the church, and hospitality moved from informal to formal structures and institutions. Physical spaces for lodging, poorhouses, orphanages, hospitals, and homes for the elderly were built. Institutions formalized roles and oversight and put rules and guidelines into place.⁹⁹ Care provided on a large scale and was increasingly distant.¹⁰⁰

The structures allowed for a widening of care in large urban centers. Chrysostom wrote that the church in Antioch cared for three thousand widows and virgins daily as well as prisoners, the sick and disabled, and travelers.¹⁰¹ Joshua the Stylite wrote in 507 of the famine and plague in Edessa in 500 and 501 AD that the church provided for those who were sick, starving, and the dead on a large scale.¹⁰²

Pohl points out that institutionalized care did not arise out of a lack of piety or deliberate distancing from those in need but that unintended consequences of specialized institutions of care and paid staff extracted those in need from normal routines and connections.¹⁰³ Those most

⁹⁸ Pohl, *Making Room*, 31 and 32.

⁹⁹ Oden, *And You Welcomed Me*, 215-216.

¹⁰⁰ Pohl, *Making Room*, 45.

¹⁰¹ Pohl, *Making Room*, 46.

¹⁰² Oden, *And You Welcomed Me*, 226-277

¹⁰³ Pohl, *Making Room*, 48.

in need of personal attention and hospitality, the poor and the stranger, received care at a distance, with visiting dignitaries receiving personal and lavish hospitality.¹⁰⁴

John Chrysostom urged individual Christians in the city of Constantinople to personal hospitality, writing that even if the needy could be fed from common funds, “Can that benefit you?”¹⁰⁵ He encouraged them to make rooms for guests in their houses for welcome, “Let our house be Christ’s general receiving place. He does not require you to kill a calf, but only to give bread to the hungry, raiment to the naked, shelter to the stranger.”¹⁰⁶ The compassion and love for neighbors experienced in intimate settings remained the call of the individual believer, even as the church, supported by the imperial government, built institutions that served to expand hospitality and care.

During the Middle Ages, monasteries, hospitals, and large ecclesial and lay households continued to provide hospitality. Needy pilgrims and local poor relied on alms often distributed at monastery gates, while travelers, pilgrims, and visitors of higher social status received fine lodging and food. Hospitality reinforced boundaries between social classes.¹⁰⁷ Because of social and economic changes, vagrancy increased in the countryside, with the “homeless wanderer becoming an object of fear and suspicion as well as pity.”¹⁰⁸

The sixteenth century brought significant social, economic, and political changes as mobility, urbanization, plague, war, and trade led to the breakdown of rural communities and a

¹⁰⁴ Pohl, *Making Room*, 45.

¹⁰⁵ Chrysostom, John, Homily 45.4 on Acts, NPNF1, vol.11, p. 277.

¹⁰⁶ Oden, *And You Welcomed Me*, 62.

¹⁰⁷ Pohl, *Making Room*, 48.

¹⁰⁸ Brian Tierney, 1959, *Medieval poor law: a sketch of canonical theory and its application in England*, (Berkeley: University of California Press), p. 112.

growing group of people severed from social networks.¹⁰⁹ Protestant reformers called for a return to early practices of hospitality focusing on care for the needy and exiles.¹¹⁰ Yet, for Luther and Calvin, hospitality was to be practiced in civic institutions and domestic life, not within sacred space. Public and civic life became more secularized and the private sphere more privatized, and increasingly people lived in proximity to strangers in urban centers. An understanding of hospitality as a Christian practice of the church diminished.¹¹¹

Benevolent associations during the 19th century in the US developed programs to meet newcomers' needs in cities. They addressed needs of poverty, sickness, and illiteracy and were staffed by those who united around a concern. Yet they were rarely congregational undertakings, there was no community base in which reciprocal relationships of friendship could develop.¹¹²

In our current situation of hospitality and care, we may assume that those without resources can turn to institutions. John Chrysostom's words to a church that was increasingly distanced from the opportunity to practice hospitality could apply to believers in the US today. What opportunities are we missing to encounter Christ in guest and host relationships because individuals and communities do not enter into relationships with the stranger?

Anthropology

Created in the image of God, the *imago Dei*, humans are made for a flourishing relationship with God, people, and the world. Yet the image of God in us is tarnished and broken

¹⁰⁹ Pohl, *Making Room*, 51.

¹¹⁰ Pohl, *Making Room*, 52.

¹¹¹ Pohl, *Making Room*, 53.

¹¹² Pohl, *Making Room*, 55.

by sin. God invites us to share in His life, to dwell with Him as members of the household of God through the healing and restoration of the imago Dei.¹¹³

Our value is not based on our capacity for reason, creation, or stewardship, but in who we are as humans created in God's image. Early Christians made this connection between acknowledging the image of God and service to one another,

However, as we know that humans were made after the image and the likeness of God, we tell you to be pious towards them, that the favor may be counted as done to God, whose image each one is. Therefore, it behooves you to give honor to the image of God, which is humanity—in these ways: food to the hungry, drink to the thirsty, clothing of the naked, care for the sick, shelter to the stranger, and visiting one who is in prison...¹¹⁴

We are relational beings, entering the world looking for someone who is looking for us and embedded in “relations between self, other, and the world.”¹¹⁵ We are shaped and conditioned through our relationships, the structures of society, and institutions.¹¹⁶ God has given us freedom to respond and relate to our social and natural environments, inviting us to stand in “an affirming communion with them.”¹¹⁷ We are to intentionally value the least of these, the very young and old, the very sick or disabled, the stranger, and come before one another with reverence and respect, love and empathy.

¹¹³ Oden, *And You Welcomed Me*, 87.

¹¹⁴ Oden, *And You Welcomed Me*, 88.

¹¹⁵ Curt Thompson, 2021, *The Soul of Desire: Discovering the Neuroscience of Longing, Beauty, and Community*, Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 21.

¹¹⁶ Miroslav Volf, 1998. *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity. Sacra Doctrina. Grand Rapids, Mich.:* William B. Eerdmans, 185.

¹¹⁷ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, 186.

Humanitarianism or Kenosis?

For many Christians, global humanitarianism equals love for ones' neighbor. With the parable of the Good Samaritan in mind, concern at a distance, for those who remain out of our circle, may be seen as a concern superior to proximate neighbors. However, a deep Christian response to need will be incarnational, a *kenosis*, that follows the example of Jesus in his incarnation and crucifixion.¹¹⁸ Christian giving and generosity flow from blessing, knowing, and honoring God as the ultimate giver. The church's call is to forge a common life with those who are destitute, powerless, and afflicted from a desire for *shalom* and nourishment for all.¹¹⁹

God's people were called to offer hospitality to the stranger because they received God's saving hospitality through the Exodus, the paradigm for God's faithfulness, justice, and compassion.¹²⁰ Jesus became a stranger and lived out guest and host relationships, becoming the ultimate host through his broken body and resurrection as He invites people from every tribe and tongue into his Kingdom.

In his book, *Christ and the Common Life: Political Theology and the Case for Democracy*, Luke Bretherton discusses the global phenomenon of humanitarianism.¹²¹ Global humanitarianism grew out of the Atlantic world combination of Christian mission, philosophical ideas, and social movements like the antislavery movement and led to the 1951 Refugee Convention and the founding of the UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees).

¹¹⁸ Luke Bretherton, 2019. *Christ and the Common Life: Political Theology and the Case for Democracy*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 66.

¹¹⁹ Bretherton, *Christ and the Common Life*, 70-71.

¹²⁰ Wright, *Old Testament Ethics*, 69.

¹²¹ Bretherton, *Christ and the Common Life*, 51.

Critics of humanitarianism point out multiple problematic issues with humanitarian aid and development. They often undermine indigenous ways to address problems, focusing on a capitalist and white Western way of life.¹²² Humanitarian agencies must make decisions about where to invest limited resources to address human suffering and often raise money by portraying third world poverty in demeaning stereotypes, the modern representation of the other who suffers, “regarded only as someone to be seen, not someone (like us) who also sees.”¹²³ Humanitarianism articulates the duties the rich and powerful have toward those who are powerless and poor, retaining distance and hierarchy.¹²⁴

Humanitarianism is based on beneficence, doing good or performing kind deeds, with the act of giving becoming the primary focus. Bretherton distinguishes between a humanitarian beneficence and a Christian theology of blessing, “an order of beneficence is an order of bestowal where the privileged bestow status on others, whereas an order of blessing is one where the privileged recognize the poor as fellow creatures with whom they share a common life on which everyone depends.”¹²⁵

A Christian theology of care for the stranger will differ from market or state solutions that are created to only be effective, efficient, or just means of distributing resources.¹²⁶ It will call for a relationship with the stranger from a position of humility and mutual flourishing. Following the pattern of Jesus, it often leads to *kenosis* on the part of the giver, requiring

¹²² Bretherton, *Christ and the Common Life*, 56.

¹²³ Sontag, Susan. 2003. *Regarding the Pain of Others*. 1st ed. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 40.

¹²⁴ Bretherton, *Christ and the Common Life*, 59.

¹²⁵ Bretherton, *Christ and the Common Life*, 70.

¹²⁶ Bretherton, *Christ and the Common Life*, 78.

sacrifice and poverty of spirit.¹²⁷ The core of hospitality involves both universalizing the neighbor and personalizing the stranger through individual acts of welcome.¹²⁸ Hospitality transforms abstract commitments to loving the stranger into practical and personal expressions of respect and care.

Concluding Thoughts on Christian Hospitality

A specifically Christian practice of hospitality is rooted in the Biblical texts of the Old and New Testament and the life of the early church. Christian hospitality is not only commanded by God but reflects his character and actions and somehow draws us closer in communion with Christ (Matt. 25:40). As the church has grown and adapted through the past twenty centuries, creating institutions of care and hospitality, individuals and church communities have often had less personal engagement with the stranger. Yet, the personal practice of hospitality to the stranger is not only a demonstration of the mercy and compassion of God that the people of God have experienced but is a witness to the wider culture. A Christian anthropology views all as created in the *imago Dei*, all worthy of love and respect and recognition.

Community sponsorship of newcomers is a Christian way of welcoming the stranger, a way that is personal and opens the possibility of strangers becoming guests and hosts, friends and family. It is caring for those who are the least of these, entering into a political and social arena where harm has been done. Claims of loving one's neighbor and the stranger have to be accompanied by the hard work of actually welcoming a human being into a real place.¹²⁹

¹²⁷ Bretherton, *Christ and the Common Life*, 66.

¹²⁸ Pohl, *Making Room*, 75.

¹²⁹ Pohl, *Making Room*, 75.

Community Sponsorship

Overview

For this section of the literature review, I searched for literature through books and articles on sponsorship, like *Strangers to Neighbors, Refugee Sponsorship in Context*,¹³⁰ a collection of studies about Canada's community sponsorship, and through policy briefs and reports published by the Global Refugee Sponsorship Initiative and the University of Ottawa's Refugee Hub, following the footnotes to find pertinent materials. Two issues in *Refuge: Canada's Journal on Refugees* focused on sponsorship: *The Indochinese Refugee Movement and the Launch of Canada's Private Sponsorship Program* published in 2016 and *Refugee Sponsorship: Lessons Learned, Ways Forward*, published in 2019. I also searched the Digital Theological Library and world library databases. I include books, journal articles, and government documents. Newspaper or magazine articles are referred to where scholarly works are not yet available on sponsorship in the US.

This section is arranged chronologically as it traces the development and practice as well as the questions being asked by researchers. Early studies often focused on the integration of newcomers, while later asked questions about mutuality and definitions of integration. Each of these sections is important and instructive to the study of HFR's sponsorship program as they have recruited, trained, and coached teams using the community sponsorship model developed and practiced in Canada since the late 1970s.

After the First World War, the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) and the Jewish Immigrant Aid Services (JIAS) of Canada were founded to assist arriving co-religionists. During

¹³⁰ Edited by Shauna Labman and Geoffrey Cameron, 2020, *Strangers to Neighbors, Refugee Sponsorship in Context*, Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press.

World War II, other religious groups formed to bring and assist those who had been displaced from Europe on an ad hoc basis.¹³¹ Joseph Kage, the national executive vice president of JIAS, advocated a provision in the law for sponsorship by private individuals or social agencies beginning in 1967 to formalize sponsorship in response to a government white paper on immigration, and in 1973 as the legislative review process for a new Immigration Law began.¹³²

Provision for sponsorship in Canada's Immigration Law of 1976 was followed by public attention on the crisis in Indochina and the rapid expansion and embrace of sponsorship across the country. Particular attention in the literature has been given to periods with large numbers of newcomers and sponsorship groups: the Indochine, Kosovar, and Syrian arrivals. Most of the literature in this review follows this path of research, beginning with the founding and rapid expansion of sponsorship in 1979 and 1980, when more than 30,000 Indochinese would be resettled through sponsorship, to research on the experiences of sponsors and newcomers from Kosovo, and to studies on the sponsorship of those fleeing Syria.

This review includes a small section on the worldwide spread of formal sponsorship since 2016, as the Global Refugee Sponsorship Hub has encouraged and informed the model outside of Canada. An initial study by the University of Ottawa's Refugee Hub of pilot programs in several countries is included.

In the US, all entering with refugee status arrive through one of the nine resettlement agencies. Though there is no provision by law for community sponsorship, the State Department's Bureau of Populations, Refugees, and Migration (PRM) has a definition for co-sponsorship,

¹³¹ Shauna Labman, 2016, "Private Sponsorship: Complementary or Conflicting Interests?" *Refuge* 32, no. 2, 68.

¹³² Labman, "Private Sponsorship," 68.

Community groups which have accepted—in a (non-legally binding) written agreement with a resettlement agency—the responsibility to provide, or ensure the provision of, reception and placement services to certain refugees sponsored by the agency. PRM also recognizes that resettlement agencies may also coordinate other forms of community sponsorship, allowing groups of individuals to provide clearly defined financial and/or in-kind contributions and volunteer services to the newly arriving refugees...¹³³

In the study, *Examining the Impact of Community Sponsorship on Early Refugee Labor Market Outcomes in the United States*, Emily Linn examined records from ten years of private sponsorship through Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services (LIRS). Within their sixteen sites, administrative data revealed that 65 percent of those resettled had been paired with sponsors. Suspecting that sponsorship was under-reported, LIRS sent a survey in 2020 that found that 13.5% of individuals had been listed as sponsored, with only 20% of them previously showing they had been sponsored on the administrative data.¹³⁴ Linn points out that due to the lack of data and various definitions of sponsorship, even within one organization, sponsorship is “woefully understudied.”¹³⁵

Finally, Sponsor Circles, a private community sponsorship program, began in September of 2021 in response to the resettlement needs of Afghan allies and then Ukrainians. Newspaper and magazine articles offered anecdotal snapshots that are included in this review.

¹³³ US Department of State, 2021 *FY 2022 Notice of Funding Opportunity for Reception and Placement Program*. Accessed April 11, 2023, www.state.gov/fy-2022-notice-of-funding-opportunity-for-reception-and-placement-program/.

¹³⁴ Emily Crane Linn, 2022, "Examining the Impact of Community Sponsorship on Early Refugee Labor Market Outcomes in the United States," *Journal on Migration and Human Security* 10, no. 2: 113-133. journals.sagepub.com/doi/epub/10.1177/23315024221102132.

¹³⁵ Linn, “Examining the Impact of Community Sponsorship,” 113.

Beginnings of Canada's Private Sponsorship Program

The private sponsorship option in Canada's Immigration Law of 1976 was largely due to an effort by the Jewish Immigrant Aid Society to allow for the sponsorship of Soviet Jews by Jewish groups and synagogues.¹³⁶ William Janzen writes of conversations with officials working in the Immigration Department at the time, they "had just felt that it would be good to have the Act, to be used if necessary."¹³⁷ The provision stated that Sponsorship Agreement Holders (organizations such as faith-based groups), organizations or corporations based in the place where newcomers would settle, or groups of five or more Canadians residents could sponsor the application for admission of a recognized refugee.¹³⁸ But what was to be a small provision changed in scope as the public's attention on the Indochinese crisis coincided with a change in Canada's political leadership. Whereas the previous government had agreed to take 50 families a month, in July of 1979 the new government committed to resettle 50,000 newcomers from Indochina by the end of 1980.¹³⁹

Though people were interested in sponsoring, assuming full liability for a refugee and accompanying dependents was a barrier to the wider spread of sponsorship. In 1979, the Mennonite Central Committee of Canada (MCCC) became the first Sponsorship Agreement Holder (SAH) as they negotiated with the Government of Canada a Master Agreement (M.A.)

¹³⁶ Howard Adelman, 2021, "Operation Lifeline." *Finding Refuge in Canada: Narratives of Dislocation*, Edited by George Melnyk and Christina Parker, Athabasca, AB, Canada: Athabasca University Press.

¹³⁷ William Janzen, 2006, "The 1979 MCC Canada Master Agreement for the Sponsorship of Refugees in Historical Perspective," *Journal of Mennonite Studies* 24 (2006): 211—222.

¹³⁸ Refworld, *Canada Immigration Act, 1976-1977*, c. 52, s. 1, www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6b5c60.html.

¹³⁹ Gerald E. Dirks, 1977, *Canada's Refugee Policy: Indifference or Opportunism?* Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press.

for the private sponsorship of refugees.¹⁴⁰ The M.A. spelled out the responsibilities of the MCCC, the government, and how communication would flow between involved parties, with the MCCC accepting liability and screening local groups and congregations.¹⁴¹ Other religious bodies soon followed, with forty Master Agreements signed in 1979.¹⁴²

The earliest example of a community using the law's provision was in Windsor, Ontario, where Mayor Bert Weeks worked with faith and non-governmental organizations to establish the Ad Hoc Committee on Indochinese Refugees. The Committee created the Friendship Families program to welcome the newcomers and help them integrate.¹⁴³ The program was an original model and proved successful for the newcomers' integration in work and school. In an exploratory case study showing the role of the Windsor program in shaping Canada's response to the refugee crisis, researcher Giovana Roma noted the lessons learned from Windsor included "the importance of strong leadership, community engagement, and multilevel partnerships" as well as the "important role localized communities play in forging responses to humanitarian crises."¹⁴⁴ Other community-led groups, like Project 4,000 and Operation Lifeline, were set up

¹⁴⁰ Janzen, "The 1979 MCC Canada Master Agreement," 212.

¹⁴¹ Janzen, "The 1979 MCC Canada Master Agreement," 212.

¹⁴² Master Agreements signed include: MCC, Presbyterian Church of Canada, Council of Canadian Reformed Churches of Canada, Canadian Lutheran World Relief, World Vision of Canada, United Church of Canada, Baptist convention of Ontario and Quebec, National Council of YMCAs of Canada, 21 Roman Catholic Diocese and 5 Anglican diocese, Baptist Union of Western Canada, Ukrainian Canadian Committee, Ontario Conference of seventh Day Adventist Church of Canada, Christian and Missionary Alliance, (from "Refugee and Humanitarian Programs," Dec. 5, 2979, file 8620-1, vol. 1811, RG 76, LAC).

¹⁴³ Giovana Roma, 2016, "The Indochinese Refugee Movement: An Exploratory Case Study of the Windsor Experience," *Refuge: Canada's Journal on Refugees*, 32, no. 2., p. 82-83.

¹⁴⁴ Roma, "The Indochinese Refugee Movement," 87.

to assist Canadians in forming sponsorship groups and provide them with needed services. By the end of January 1980, the number of sponsoring groups came to 5,457.¹⁴⁵

Eventually, Canada would resettle 60,000 Indochinese in 1979 and 1980, with 25,978 coming through government-assisted programs, 32,281 through sponsorships, and 2,000 sponsored by their Canadian relatives.¹⁴⁶ Of the roughly 7000 sponsorship groups formed, 70 percent were with Sponsorship Agreement Holders, 99% of which were affiliated with religious organizations.

Janzen gave several reasons for the MCCC's leadership. Canadian Mennonites had a history of being refugees themselves, and had sponsored Mennonites fleeing the Soviet Union in the 1920s and European Mennonites after WW2. In the following decades, they had sponsored those fleeing Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Uganda, and Chile.¹⁴⁷ Mennonites were familiar with Vietnam and had supported work there since the fifties. They saw the church as a corporate social actor and had a strong history of working with the government, seeing the government as their partner in doing good, while serving the humanitarian interests of the government. MCCC, their national agency, had well-established structures throughout the provinces to support sponsoring churches and groups.¹⁴⁸

In an analysis of the integration of Indochine newcomers, Neuwirth and Clark studied sixteen sponsorship groups and their respective newcomer families midway through their

¹⁴⁵ Gertrud Clark and Lynn Neuwirth, 1981, "Indochinese Refugees in Canada: Sponsorship and Adjustment," *International Migration Review* 15: 10, Accessed August 18, 2022, doi.org/10.2307/2545332.

¹⁴⁶ Canada, Employment and Immigration, 1982, *Indochine Refugees: The Canadian Response 1979-1980*. Ottawa: Minister of Supply and Services Canada, 20.

¹⁴⁷ Janzen, "The 1979 MCC Canada Master Agreement," 213-214.

¹⁴⁸ Janzen, "The 1979 MCC Canada Master Agreement," 219.

sponsorship year. Sponsoring groups ranged in size from five to seventy or more members.¹⁴⁹ Those who sponsored out of “moral obligation based on goodwill or humanitarian principles” were more likely to follow through on their group responsibilities than those who volunteered based on “spontaneous goodwill or reasons of personal growth.”¹⁵⁰ The majority of newcomers viewed their sponsors as trustworthy and social equals.

However, private sponsors often focused on short-term support over building relationships of trust to help with long-term integration.¹⁵¹ Morton Beiser’s study on the mental health of Indochine refugees over ten years raised concerns about the insensitivity and intrusiveness of sponsors, finding no long-term mental health advantages in newcomers privately sponsored.¹⁵² He suggested “sensitive guidance by the agencies that sponsor host and sponsorship programs...so that newcomers ...can reap the benefits of these potentially useful initiatives.”¹⁵³

Conducted twenty-five years after their arrival, Stobbe’s study of the experiences of Lao refugees and Mennonite sponsors in the late 1970s and early 1980s, showed high levels of satisfaction with the program.¹⁵⁴ Half of the sponsors cited “the Anabaptist tradition of helping those in need as a motivation to sponsor, with others being personal interest, personal experience as refugees and immigrants, response to injustice, and friendship with newly arrived refugees

¹⁴⁹ Clark and Neuwirth, “Indochinese Refugees in Canada,” 133.

¹⁵⁰ Clark and Neuwirth, “Indochinese Refugees in Canada,” 134.

¹⁵¹ Clark and Neuwirth, “Indochinese Refugees in Canada,” 140.

¹⁵² Morton Beiser, 1999, *Strangers at the Gate: The "Boat People's" First Ten Years in Canada*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, p. 121.

¹⁵³ Beiser, *Strangers at the Gate*, 123.

¹⁵⁴ Stephanie Phetsamay. Stobbe 2006, "Cross-Cultural Experiences of Laotian Refugees and Mennonite Sponsors in British Columbia and Manitoba," *Journal of Mennonite Studies* 24: 111-128.

who encouraged them to sponsor other refugees.”¹⁵⁵ Both sponsors and newcomers identified the importance of understanding one another’s culture, history, and situation. Seventy percent of the sponsors interviewed had continued in sponsorship since their first sponsorship with Lao newcomers.¹⁵⁶

Research focused on the founding and development of community sponsorship traced the details of the beginnings through the Immigration Act of 1976 and the rapid expansion across Canada to accommodate large numbers of Indochine newcomers. MCCC’s leadership in working with the Canadian government to sign the first Master Agreement led to other organizations, mostly faith-based, to do the same. Communities, like Windsor, developed structures to facilitate sponsorship. Scholarship focused on integration outcomes and pointed to the need for guidance of the sponsors.

Kosovo Sponsorship

The next large wave of public response to the call for sponsorship occurred in 1999 when Canada agreed to resettle Kosovar refugees who had been displaced to Macedonia. A well-publicized appeal for Canadians to give emotional and practical support led to approximately 1000 groups forming and new organizations forming Sponsorship Agreements.¹⁵⁷

Derwing and Mulder’s study on the experiences of sponsors in Northern Alberta revealed challenges in the expectations of sponsorship and lack of support.¹⁵⁸ Their recommendations for

¹⁵⁵ Stobbe, "Cross-Cultural Experiences," 114.

¹⁵⁶ Stobbe, "Cross-Cultural Experiences," 112.

¹⁵⁷ Barbara Treviranus and Michael Casasola, 2003, "Canada’s Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program: A Practitioners Perspective of Its Past and Future," *Journal of International Migration and Integration* 4, p.192

¹⁵⁸ Tracey M. Mulder and Marlene Derwing,, 2003, "The Kosovar Sponsoring Experience in Northern Alberta," *Journal of International Migration and Integration* 4, p. 217.

successful sponsorship included ongoing support, on-site training, and regular debriefing to understand the boundaries of roles and provide forum for ongoing questions.¹⁵⁹

Those who volunteered to sponsor remained committed when they received “support and supervision, enjoy compatibility between their beliefs and values and those of the refugees, and volunteer tasks are meaningful, feasible, and related to their interest.”¹⁶⁰ Behnia, in his study on the perspectives of volunteers, suggested involving refugees and sponsors in planning and overseeing sponsorship programs as well as listening to their ongoing perspectives and experiences.¹⁶¹

In their 2003 article on sponsorship, Treviranus and Casasola explored the benefits of sponsorship to both newcomers and sponsors. Newcomers’ ability to integrate into Canadian life was often enhanced by the assistance given by their sponsoring group. Sponsors gained empathy as they saw and experienced the challenges newcomers faced and often became advocates for those they had helped to resettle and as well as refugees in general.¹⁶² As a wide cross-section of the public became involved in sponsorship, the program became flexible enough to handle current settlement needs.¹⁶³

Scholarship on the sponsorship during the Kosovo crisis pointed to challenges in expectations with sponsors and their need for support and supervision, perhaps because of a lack

¹⁵⁹ Mulder and Derwing, "The Kosovar Sponsoring Experience," 235.

¹⁶⁰ Behnam Behnia, 2007, "An Exploratory Study of Befriending Programs with Refugees: The Perspective of Volunteer Organizations," *Journal of Immigrant & Refugee Studies* 5, no. 3, p. 15.

¹⁶¹ Behnia, "An Exploratory Study of Befriending Programs," 15.

¹⁶² Treviranus and Casasola, "Canada's Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program," 183.

¹⁶³ Treviranus and Casasola, "Canada's Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program," 200.

of groups and SAHs without previous history of sponsorship. Research continued to point out the potential benefits to both sponsors and newcomers.

The Syrian Crisis

By 2015, the Private Sponsorship of Refugees program had fallen to historic lows, and the government had pledged to take only 10,000 refugees. The photo of Syrian toddler Aylan Kurdi changed worldwide perspectives on those fleeing Syria.¹⁶⁴ With the public surge of interest in sponsorship and the victory of Trudeau's Liberal Party, by August 2018, 58,600 Syrians had arrived in Canada, with 27,100 coming under private sponsorship.¹⁶⁵ Over the previous decades, most sponsorship had been done largely by Sponsorship Agreement Holder (SAH) groups with systems and groups in place.¹⁶⁶ During the Syrian crisis, people with no previous experience banded together to form sponsorship groups, and online postings of resettled refugees raised issues of consent and humanization of the newcomers.¹⁶⁷

In a comparison of Syrians arriving as government-assisted or privately sponsored, the social networks of those sponsored included more individuals outside of their own language, culture, religion, or country of origin.¹⁶⁸ Findings were that social integration of sponsored

¹⁶⁴ Farida Vis and Olga Goriunova, (Eds.). 2015, *The Iconic Image on Social Media: A Rapid Research Response to the Death of Aylan Kurdi*: Visual Social Media Lab, pure.royalholloway.ac.uk/portal/files/41164696/iconic_image_on_social_media.pdf.

¹⁶⁵ Sandeep Kumar Agrawal, 2018, "Canadian Refugee Sponsorship Programs: Experience of Syrian Refugees in Alberta, Canada," *Journal of International Migration and Integration* 20: 941-962, doi.org/10.1007/s12134-018-0640-7.

¹⁶⁶ Elizabeth Coffin-Karlin, 2020, "Refugee Sponsorship in an Age of Social Media," In *Strangers to Neighbors*, edited by Shauna Labman and Geoffrey Cameron: McGill-Queens University Press, p. 157.

¹⁶⁷ Coffin-Karlin, "Refugee Sponsorship," 161.

¹⁶⁸ Mehrunnisa Ahmad Ali, Shamiram Zendo, and Shaina Somers. 2021, "Structures and Strategies for Social Integration: Privately Sponsored and Government Assisted Refugees," *Journal of Immigrant & Refugee Studies*, Accessed September 20, 2022, [doi.org/DOI: 10.1080/15562948.2021.1938332](https://doi.org/10.1080/15562948.2021.1938332), p. 5.

newcomers was facilitated by their sponsors' social capital, the focus on a single family, and flexible responses to needs. Acceptance of racial, ethnic, religious, and class differences led to mutual respect, but trust took longer in a setting where one party had more power in the relationship.¹⁶⁹ Sponsorship groups and newcomers who were able to have pre-arrival contact online were better able to develop mutual recognition of trust, needs, and expectations beyond the newcomers' status as refugees and the sponsors' status as helpers.¹⁷⁰

In a qualitative study of the experience of sponsors, newcomers, and settlement agencies by Sandeep Awal, newcomer interviewees expressed a need for better information and preparation by sponsors. Sponsors did not offer them sufficient opportunities to act independently, often doubting their skills and capacity.¹⁷¹ The settlement experiences of those sponsored varied based on the sponsors' commitment, experience, and understanding of the challenges faced by those resettling.¹⁷²

The sponsorship commitment was one year, at which point, newcomers were to be "employed and living independently in Canada, as productive members of society."¹⁷³ Lenard's study pointed to a variety of views on independence. One group of sponsors emphasized language skills and education, while another emphasized the capacity and willingness to shift habits and norms, noting that independence was gained "gradually and imperfectly" over the

¹⁶⁹ Ali, Zendo, and Somers, "Structures and Strategies for Social Integration," 11.

¹⁷⁰ C. Kyriakides, L. Bajjali, A. McLuhan, and K. Anderson, 2018, "Beyond Refuge: Contested Orientalism and Persons of Self-Rescue," *Canadian Ethnic Studies* 50, no. 2: 50-78. Accessed September 20, 2022, www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/beyond-refuge-contested-orientalism-persons-self/docview/2085006805/se-2.

¹⁷¹ Agrawal, 2018, "Canadian Refugee Sponsorship Programs," 953.

¹⁷² Agrawal, "Canadian Refugee Sponsorship Programs," 959.

¹⁷³ Patti Tamara Lenard, 2019, "How Do Sponsors Think About "Month 13?" *Refuge* 35, no. 2, 64.

course of the sponsorship year and beyond.¹⁷⁴ Many newcomers had experienced trauma and needed the time to decompress in a safe and secure place without the pressure to be independent as quickly as possible.¹⁷⁵

In a qualitative study on Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) sponsorship groups, most sponsors and newcomers described their ongoing relationship as family.¹⁷⁶ MCC framed the relationship between sponsor and newcomer as one of sharing and partnership as MCCC staff helped groups to understand their own cultural biases, power dynamics, and the priority of the relational aspects of sponsorship.¹⁷⁷ Ens, Gingrich, and Thea noted that the transition from sponsorship to mutually transformative relationships was paradoxical, introducing tensions and conflicts as well as possibilities.¹⁷⁸

The large surge of sponsorship during the Syrian crisis echoed the Indochine resettlement forty years before, with citizens acting on their concern by engaging in sponsorship. The new reality of social media raised issues of consent and objectification of newcomers. The capacity for online contact between sponsors and newcomers before arrival led to better mutual understanding between sponsors and newcomers. Newcomers pointed out the need for sponsors to have adequate preparation to understand their challenges. Research revealed the variety of views by sponsors on what independence meant for newcomers, pointing out the need for a well-

¹⁷⁴ Lenard, "How Do Sponsors Think About "Month 13?" 68.

¹⁷⁵ Lenard, "How Do Sponsors Think About "Month 13?" 72.

¹⁷⁶ Luann Good Enns and Thea Gingrich, 2019, "A Reflexive View of Refugee Integration and Inclusion: A Case Study of the Mennonite Central Committee and the Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program," *Refuge* 35, no. 2 (2019), 18.

¹⁷⁷ Stephanie Dyck, 2017, "Private Refugee Sponsorship in Canada: An Opportunity for Mutual Transformation," *Intersections: Challenges and Opportunities in Refugee Resettlement* 5, no. 4: 13-14, Accessed September 20, 2022, mcc.org/sites/mcc.org/files/media/common/documents/intersectionsfall2017-web.pdf.

¹⁷⁸ Enns and Gingrich, "A Reflexive View of Refugee Integration and Inclusion," 18.

developed understanding of long-term adaptation. A study of MCCC sponsors and newcomers showed the mutually transformative relationships developed by sponsors and newcomers after the beginning year of sponsorship.

Beyond Canada

Supported by both the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the Open Society Initiative, The Global Refugee Sponsorship Initiative (GRSI) began in 2016 with the stated goal of exporting Canada's sponsorship model. In 2019 it scaled back its goal from exporting to providing training, technical support, and capacity building for community-based support programs.¹⁷⁹ The University of Ottawa Refugee Hub's Global Literature Synthesis Report began by defining the integration of newcomers into their new culture according to the UK Home Office's Indicators of Integration Framework (IOI).¹⁸⁰ The framework, pictured below, categorizes integration as factors that both indicate successful integration and a means to integration. Holistic models of integration consider both the newcomer becoming more like the host community and how the host community adapts in response to the newcomer.¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁹ Craig Damian Smith, 2020, "A Model for the World? Policy Transfer Theory and the Challenges to "Exporting" Private Sponsorship to Europe," In *Strangers to Neighbors: Refugee Sponsorship in Context*, edited by Shauna Labman and Geoffrey Cameron: McGill-Queens University Press, p. 286.

¹⁸⁰ Tasha Stansbury, *Global Literature Synthesis Report: Refugee Sponsorship and Integration Outcomes*, University of Ottawa Refugee Hub, 2021, Accessed September 20, 2022. refugeehub.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/Refugee-Sponsorship-and-Integration-Outcomes-Report-FINAL-2022.pdf, p. 4.

¹⁸¹ Stansbury, *Global Literature Synthesis Report*, 5.

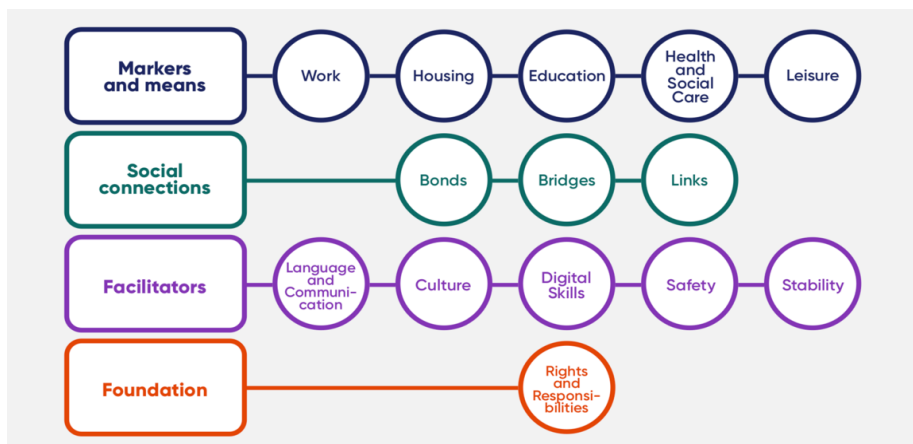


Figure 1 Indicator of Integration (Ndofor-Tah et al. 2019)

Similarly, Stansbury outlined and discussed the sponsorship programs in Argentina, the UK, Italy, France, Australia, New Zealand, Ireland, Spain, and Germany through the lens of integration factors of language, employment, housing, education, health, social connections, and legal status.¹⁸² The results showed that sponsorship had a positive impact on integration factors, with positive benefits for both newcomers and host communities.¹⁸³ She noted that pre-arrival contact to develop the relationship and manage expectations helped counteract the problematic generalizations around culture, ethnicity, and language.¹⁸⁴

In summary, for sponsorship to be a beneficial experience for all involved, it is important to explore motivations, provide culturally-sensitive training, and have structures in place for ongoing support and debriefing opportunities during the sponsorship period. Sponsorship has the potential to widen the openness and capacity of communities to welcome when there is rapid shifting of resettlement needs. In studying HFR's program and the experience of sponsors, past

¹⁸² Stansbury, *Global Literature Synthesis Report*, 9.

¹⁸³ Stansbury, *Global Literature Synthesis Report*, 31.

¹⁸⁴ Stansbury, *Global Literature Synthesis Report*, 33.

studies on sponsorship provide a solid foundation of knowledge, yet they are done outside of the US context of resettlement policy and practice.

Community Co-sponsorship in the US

Unlike the trend in Canada, the US moved away from sponsorship and community-supported models in the 1990s to standardize care for newcomers. The program shifted from operating through churches to subcontracts with professional case workers in resettlement agencies in order to standardize care as more complex service delivery regulations were put in place.¹⁸⁵ An unfortunate result of this professionalization of resettlement is that with less direct engagement, communities are more likely to react negatively to newcomers.¹⁸⁶ However, a resettlement agency reported that in offices where it has shifted to a co-sponsorship model, communities have become more open to receiving newcomers.¹⁸⁷

Most of the nine resettlement agencies now refer to community co-sponsorship opportunities on their websites. For example, the International Rescue Mission notes the surge of community interest and expanding of co-sponsorship opportunities, “... as people flee Afghanistan and Ukraine, more local community groups have been offering their help. The IRC and other resettlement agencies have responded to this enthusiasm by integrating community sponsorship at the local and national levels.”¹⁸⁸ Some examples are: Church World Services’

¹⁸⁵ Susan Dorst and Emma Fratzke, 2019, *Volunteers and Sponsors: A Catalyst for Refugee Integration?*, Migration Policy Institute, 10.

¹⁸⁶ Dorst and Fratzke, *Volunteers and Sponsors*, 9.

¹⁸⁷ Dorst and Fratzke, *Volunteers and Sponsors*, 9.

¹⁸⁸ "How Can My Community Group Sponsor a Refugee in the U.S.?" International Rescue Committee, Accessed October 7, 2022, www.rescue.org/page/how-can-my-community-group-sponsor-refugee-us.

Community Sponsorship Portal,¹⁸⁹ Episcopal Migration Ministries' Neighbor to Neighbor program,¹⁹⁰ and World Relief's Good Neighbor Teams 2.0.¹⁹¹

The State Department's Bureau of Populations, Refugees, and Migration (PRM) defines community sponsorship as community groups taking the responsibility to provide or ensure the provision of reception and placement services. Agencies "may also coordinate other forms of community sponsorship, allowing groups of individuals to provide clearly defined financial and/or in-kind contributions and volunteer services to the newly arriving refugees..."¹⁹²

Expanding to a co-sponsorship model requires a change of paradigm and practice. These resettlement agencies are moving from a focus on case management services to training and supporting community members. Managing sponsors is time-consuming and important work if it is to be done well. Dorst and Fratzke give the following guidelines for management of sponsors: 1) Careful selection and clear expectations. 2) In-depth orientation and training. 3) Maintenance of open channels for communication and feedback.¹⁹³

Some community co-sponsorship groups take responsibility for the cost of resettlement for one year.¹⁹⁴ In Connecticut, Integrated Refugee and Immigrant Services (IRIS), a

¹⁸⁹ "Community Sponsorship," Church World Services, Accessed October 7, 2022, cwsglobal.org/take-action/community-sponsorship/.

¹⁹⁰ "Neighbor to Neighbor," Episcopal Migration Ministries, Accessed October 7, 2022, episcopalmigrationministries.org/neighbor-toneighbor/.

¹⁹¹ "What Is Good Neighbor Team 2.0?" World Relief, Accessed October 7, 2022, worldrelief.org/memphis/get-involved/gnt2/#what-is-GNT.

¹⁹² U.S. Department of State, 2021, "FY 2022 Notice of Funding Opportunity for Reception and Placement Program," Accessed October 7, 2022, www.state.gov/fy-2022-notice-of-funding-opportunity-for-reception-and-placement-program/.

¹⁹³ Dorst and Fratzke, *Volunteers and Sponsors*, 11.

¹⁹⁴ Scott Harding and Kathryn Libal, 2020, "Doing Something to Fight Injustice," In *Strangers to Neighbors: Refugee Sponsorship in Context*, edited by Shauna Labman and Geoffrey Cameron: McGill-Queen's University Press, p. 253.

resettlement agency, received a high volume of interest in resettling refugees in the wake of the Syrian refugee crisis and anti-immigration rhetoric. The volunteer groups enhanced the capacity of IRIS and allowed the organization to resettle more newcomers.¹⁹⁵ Within a two and-a-half year period, forty-five groups worked with IRIS to resettle nearly 300 individuals (fifty-seven families). IRIS reported that those resettled with community groups found work, learned English, and integrated more quickly than those settled by IRIS alone.¹⁹⁶ The grass-roots movement towards sponsorship spread as New York residents watched communities in Connecticut mobilize; they encouraged New York resettlement agencies to establish community-based groups. Connecticut and New York sponsor groups shared information and resources.¹⁹⁷

Libal, Harding, and Champagne studied advocacy for refugees and asylum seekers through community sponsorship across the US (Connecticut, Kentucky, Michigan, Minnesota, New York, Ohio, Texas, and Utah).¹⁹⁸ They found that tutoring youth or providing transportation to newcomers fostered empathy and commitment to engage other community members in welcoming newcomers.¹⁹⁹ One interviewee discussed the potential for advocacy, “Through these relationships that happen when you have sponsorships and you have communities engaging in resettlement in some way, you are maybe building a constituency of people supportive of refugees and other newcomers.”²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁵ Harding and Libal, "Doing Something to Fight Injustice," 243.

¹⁹⁶ Harding and Libal, "Doing Something to Fight Injustice," 254-255.

¹⁹⁷ Harding and Libal, "Doing Something to Fight Injustice," 257.

¹⁹⁸ Kathryn Libal, Scott Harding, and Lukas Champagne. 2022, "Solidarity Work as Political Action: Advocating for Refugees and Asylum Seekers in the USA," *Journal of Refugee Studies* 00, no. 0, Accessed September 21, 2022, doi.org/10.1093/jrs/feac024.

¹⁹⁹ Libal, Harding, and Champagne, "Solidarity Work as Political Action," 11.

²⁰⁰ Libal, Harding, and Champagne, "Solidarity Work as Political Action," 15.

In Linn’s study of 10 years of data from Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services, she found that, as in Canada, community co-sponsorship was especially beneficial to newcomers with challenges to integration: those without US ties, single parents, and in areas of high unemployment. Overall, co-sponsorship led to increases in employment and ESL enrollment.²⁰¹ Linn calls for qualitative research to better understand the variety of sponsorship models and explore the relationship between sponsorship and psycho-social integration indicators.²⁰² This project is one response to that call.

Sponsor Circles

In addition to co-sponsorship scenarios, a private sponsorship in the US started in 2021. The Community Sponsorship Hub (CSH), a sponsored project of the Rockefeller Foundation, was established in 2021 to “grow the role of communities in the protection, resettlement, and integration of refugees and other forcibly displaced people.”²⁰³ In October of 2021 the US State Department partnered with the CSH to launch the Sponsor Circle Program for Afghans. The program allowed groups to form Sponsor Circles to support Afghan newcomers in their first three months. CSH vetted, certified circles, and matched them with arriving Afghans who chose to participate in the program.²⁰⁴ In May of 2022, the Program expanded to support Ukrainian newcomers through Uniting for Ukraine. Whereas previously community co-sponsorship limited

²⁰¹ Linn, “Examining the Impact of Community Sponsorship,” 19.

²⁰² Linn, “Examining the Impact of Community Sponsorship,” 20.

²⁰³ “About,” Community Sponsorship Hub, Accessed October 7, 2022, <https://communitysponsorshiphub.org/about/>.

²⁰⁴ U.S. Department of State, “*Launch of the Sponsor Circle Program for Afghans*,” 2021, state.gov/launch-of-the-sponsor-circle-program-for-afghans/.

involvement to those within 100 miles of a resettlement office, Sponsor Circles made sponsorship an available option for any community.

The Biden administration stated in The President's Report to Congress on Proposed Refugee Admissions for Fiscal Year 2022 that a major initiative would be to open a path to the implementation of a private sponsorship program, allowing those with refugee status to enter through sponsorship instead of through one of the nine resettlement agencies.²⁰⁵ In September of 2022 the Biden administration prepared to develop a long-term program as they teamed with organizations to launch a pilot program.²⁰⁶ In January of 2023, Welcome Corps was launched, the

Newspaper articles have reported on circles across the US since the program began. For instance, a group forming in Reading, Pennsylvania, reached out to a local church and the Islamic Center to gather resources and planned an event with a bakery to fundraise for the financial commitment.²⁰⁷ Wyoming, a state that has never had an official refugee resettlement program, now has a circle in Casper. The director of the refugee programs at Highland Park Community Church stated, "Without private sponsorship, this would not have been possible for a lot of these communities with tremendous resources and goodwill."²⁰⁸ In Seattle, a Sponsor

²⁰⁵ U.S. Department of State "Report to the Congress on Proposed Refugee Admissions for Fiscal Year 2022," Sept. 20, 2021, www.state.gov/report-to-congress-on-proposed-refugee-admissions-for-fiscal-year-2022/.

²⁰⁶ Taxin, Julie Watson and Amy, "New Model to Enlist Regular Americans to Resettle Refugees," AP News, September 18, 2022. apnews.com/article/afghanistan-russia-ukraine-united-states-immigration-477d06070766db3800efd03528c845ec.

²⁰⁷ Shuey, Karen, "Sponsor Circle of Greater Reading Raising Funds to Welcome Afghan Family," *Reading Eagle*, March 2, 2022, www.readingeagle.com/2022/03/02/sponsor-circle-of-greater-reading-raising-money/.

²⁰⁸ Taxin and Watson, "New Model to Enlist Regular Americans to Resettle Refugees."

Circle formed after failed attempts to volunteer with overwhelmed resettlement agencies.²⁰⁹ The circle met weekly on Zoom for discussion and planning and considers its main job to be, “consistent, friendly faces sitting with our family, working through paperwork and personally introducing them to the details of life here.”²¹⁰ With the program in its infancy, the stories are anecdotal but one trusts that they will become representative of larger trends.

Findings and Significance

Canada’s sponsorship program, in place since 1978, has led to positive outcomes for newcomers and receiving communities. Improvements in training and support of sponsors have been made to counter paternalism, cultural missteps, and widen the understanding of integration. Faith-based groups, like the MCCC, have contributed organizational capacity and grass-roots networks that led to the beginnings and the longevity of sponsorship programs. Canada has worked to expand its model through the GRSI, leading to several sponsorship projects around the world since 2016.

Both community sponsorship and private sponsorship through Sponsor Circles are growing movements in the US, with government policy giving a permanent place to sponsorship as a resettlement option, but little scholarship is available to reflect and report on experience and practices. Linn wrote as she studied the effect of community sponsorship on labor outcomes that further study was “sorely needed.” A variety of sponsorship models exist and the US resettlement program does not currently have an accepted definition of community sponsorship.

²⁰⁹ Johnson, Maggi, "It Takes a Village: Helping Refugees as Part of a ‘Sponsor Circle’," *The Seattle Times*, Accessed September 22, 2022. www.seattletimes.com/opinion/it-takes-a-village-helping-refugees-as-part-of-a-sponsor-circle/.

²¹⁰ Johnson, "It Takes a Village."

Across the 16 offices and sponsorship programs within the Lutheran resettlement services, sponsorship entailed a wide variety of activities and commitments.²¹¹

This project attempts to help fill that gap in the research. HFR's work since 2017 has developed through working with nearby resettlement agencies with co-sponsorship teams, through teams across the US supporting asylum-seeking newcomers with multiple barriers to integration, and to training and coaching Sponsor Circles. Studying the development and practice of HFR's recruiting, training, and coaching alongside volunteer and staff experiences will contribute much-needed scholarship as the sponsorship movement becomes a piece of US refugee policy and practice. Chapter Three explains the research methodology of this case study.

²¹¹ Linn, "Examining the Impact of Community Sponsorship," 132.

Chapter Three: Research Methodology

Aims and Objectives

The aim of this research is to investigate the development and practice of Home for Refugees' Home Team program for the purpose of encouraging the practice and expansion of sponsorship in the US. The objectives are to:

1. Investigate the experience of the recruiting, training, and coaching of individuals and groups involved in Home Teams through individual interviews with Home Team members and HFR personnel.
2. Describe the development of HFR's current practice of recruiting, training and coaching its home teams through changes in resettlement policy and practice.
3. Publish findings to encourage and inform this community-based model of the practice of hospitality with newcomers to the US.

Approach

The foundational methodological framework is theological, as the Christian practice of hospitality to the stranger is the focus of this research. It assumes God's revelation through creation and revelation through the gospel of the Kingdom of God proclaimed through the life, death, and resurrection of Christ Jesus. It is dedicated to "enabling the faithful performance of the gospel,"²¹² particularly in the realm of hospitality to the stranger. The approach assumes that

²¹² John Swinton and Harriet Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, (London: SCM Press, 2006), 4.

the practices of the Christian community call for critical reflection to be and remain faithful to the revelation and that the lived experiences of human beings, created in the image of God, matter and are worthy of attention.²¹³ Yet, the focus is not only on the Christian community but on exploring and interpreting the interplay between the practices of the world and Christians,²¹⁴ leading to theological interpretation and understanding.²¹⁵ Though HFR is a faith-based organization, with personnel who are motivated by their Christian faith, their practice of equipping Home Teams to do community sponsorship is done in the world, outside the doors of the church: in coordination with and under national and state laws, with Home Team members and newcomers from a variety of faith backgrounds.

Research of the practice of hospitality through HFR's home teams calls for qualitative research as quantitative research and statistical analysis are not adequate to examine the complexity of the experiences of volunteers and the causes of the development of HFR's program. Exploring community sponsorship through this type of research entails talking directly with volunteers and HFR personnel to listen to their experiences and allows results to be written in a literary and flexible style that can convey narratives. It also allows for a variety of methods and approaches, surveys, interviews, and organizational artifacts, so the researcher can access and understand what is unique to the situation being studied.²¹⁶

Social constructivism, or interpretivism, is an underlying assumption in qualitative research by which individuals seek to understand the world in which they live and work and

²¹³ Swinton and Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, 7.

²¹⁴ Swinton and Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, 8.

²¹⁵ Swinton and Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, 11.

²¹⁶ Swinton and Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, 29.

develop varied and multiple meanings of their experiences.²¹⁷ This research relies heavily on the participants' views and the involvement of the researcher not as a distant observer but as a participant of the interpretative experience.²¹⁸

The approach is also one of action research. Creswell writes that qualitative research contains agendas that have the potential to change the lives of all involved in the research, including those who read it.²¹⁹ Swinton and Mowat point out that the social-scientific model of action research aims to generate solutions to problems, which in practical theology involves challenging practices in the hopes that they will move to greater faithfulness.²²⁰ Though this research is concerned with best practices and models in community sponsorship of newcomers, it also involves consciousness-raising with the goal that individuals and communities would be equipped in faithfulness to God and his mission in the world.²²¹

The research questions for this study are:

1. What external and internal factors led to HFR's current model of training, and coaching?
2. How did HFR's recruiting, training, and coaching adapt to its current practice?
3. How do volunteers and HFR coaches experience the recruiting, training, and coaching process?
4. What challenges do volunteers face and how does HFR aid them?

²¹⁷ Creswell, "*Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design*," 24.

²¹⁸ Swinton and Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research* 34.

²¹⁹ Creswell, "*Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design*," 25.

²²⁰ Swinton and Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research* 262.

²²¹ Swinton and Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research* 263.

5. What is the interplay between individuals, teams, and an organization being called, bearing the cost, and experiencing the blessing of the practice of hospitality to newcomers?
6. What can be learned from HFR's experience and practice that can inform and encourage the ongoing development and expansion of community sponsorship in the US?

Limitations

This study was limited in the amount of time given to the collection of data, not more than three months, and the availability and willingness of participants to fill out surveys and meet on an electronic platform. It is also limited in sample size. Although HFR has worked with teams since 2017, the beginning years only involved a very few teams in Southern California with nationwide teams beginning in 2019 with the Family Reunification Project.

I considered bracketing the 34 sponsors of Central American asylum seekers for several reasons. My family was Home Team #14 as we hosted a family from Honduras, and those seeking asylum have an extra layer of vulnerability as their wait for court dates are years away. Many have also had long waits for work visas, and for most, new individuals and teams stepped up after the first year to continue support after the first year ended with the added challenge of COVID-19. However, the organizational learning and the experience during this time, though unique, is important to the story of the development of HFR's Home Teams.

My bias as someone involved in sponsorship includes temporary contract work with HFR for several months in 2020 as I worked with two of the teams sponsoring Central American families, one in Chicago and one in Washington D.C. These will be bracketed from the study.

The study will include HFR's story from its founding in 2017 through the end of data collection in January of 2023. In the choice to study the experience of HFR and volunteers, I am

not surveying those who are making a new home in the US, the newcomers. Issues around language, cultural differences, and vulnerability call for resources that I do not have as a doctoral student of theology.

Strategy and Research Design

A case study approach, where a particular event, process, or setting is studied from the viewpoints of key stakeholders, allows for a holistic examination of HFR as an organization as well as the experience of Home Teams. This study is a single embedded case study, limited to HFR's Home Team program but with multiple units of analysis: volunteers, HFR personnel, documents, and artifacts, with the goal of braiding the experiences of individuals and groups within the narrative.

Yin writes that single case studies are appropriate when a case is critical, unusual, common, revelatory, or longitudinal.²²² HFR's Home Team program is unusual as they have worked with multiple resettlement agencies, in multiple states, and with different models of community sponsorship (the co-sponsorship model with resettlement agencies, sponsorship of asylum seekers, and Sponsor Circles). The time period, from 2017-2022 is unique as during this period resettlement numbers were reduced dramatically during the Trump Administration, leading to reduced capacity through resettlement agencies to resettle Afghan allies in 2021 and 2022. The Biden Administration committed to rebuilding the refugee resettlement program and included expanding the use of community sponsorship and co-sponsorship models. A case study on HFR is also revelatory as their wide experience and focus have the potential to inform the continued expansion of the model in the US.

²²² Robert K. Yin, 2018, *Case Study Research and Applications: Design and Methods*, Sixth edition. ed. Los Angeles: SAGE, 49.

The boundary of this study is both its focus on the HFR's Program, to the exclusion of other organizations or resettlement agencies, and the time frame, from 2017 to through the end of data collection in January of 2023.

Setting

The setting is HFR's Home Team program. Initially founded to aid in the resettlement of newcomers in the greater Los Angeles area, HFR expanded to recruiting, training, and coaching Home Teams across the US. The setting for data collection is through surveys and online through Zoom meetings with individuals.

I chose HFR because of my knowledge of the organization through my family's one-year sponsorship of a newcomer family in 2019-2020. I had the full cooperation of the organization and access to information and contacts, making this a rich setting for data collection.

Participants

The research population consists of volunteers of Home Teams with HFR from 2017 to the end of 2022 and HFR personnel. Initial information was sent to current volunteers, 165, who had either begun their team year or were waiting on arrival of newcomers. Twenty-nine survey respondents, or 18% of the total number of volunteers in 2022, filled out the survey. Follow-up asks from coaches and my Workplace announcement went out to an undetermined number of previous volunteers. Sample size was dependent on the self-selection of volunteers based on survey completion and availability to be interviewed and availability of HFR staff. When initial surveys and interviews of volunteers all came from California, I turned my focus to a Sponsor Circle in my home state of Indiana for an in-depth exploration of a team's experience in the Midwest. This purposeful sampling, pursuing participants in the criterion of different types of

sponsorship over the years 2017 to 2022, added to the richness of the study, as the context is critical to the interpretation of the findings.²²³

Table 1

Sociodemographic Characteristics of the Volunteer Participants

	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Gender		
Female	26	78.8
Male	7	21.2
Highest educational Level		
High school	2	6.1
Associate's degree	1	3
Bachelor's degree	9	27.3
Master's degree or higher	20	60.6
Age		
25-44	5	15.2
55-64	10	30.3
65 and older	18	54.5

I interviewed fourteen survey respondents. Ten were from California teams and four from the Indiana team. Ten identified as Christian, two as Jewish, one as Unitarian Universalist, and one as non-religious. Twenty-eight, ninety percent, were from teams that were matched in 2022, with the four others from 2017 to 2021.

I interviewed eight out of nine HFR staff. The availability of staff was unexpected. My initial research focus on the experiences of volunteers shifted to include the experiences of staff. All identified as Christian.

Table 2

Sociodemographic Characteristics of the Staff Participants

²²³ Felice D. Billups, 2021, *Qualitative Data Collection Tools: Design, Development, and Applications*, Qualitative Research Methods Series. vol. volume 55, Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications, Inc., 26.

	Number	Percent
Gender		
Female	5	62.5
Male	3	37.5
Highest educational Level		
High school	1	6.1
Bachelor's degree	9	27.3
Master's degree or higher	20	60.6
Age		
25-44	6	75
55-64	1	12.5
65 and older	1	12.5

Instruments

Instruments for data collection included a consent form, an online survey for Home Team and Sponsor Circle volunteers, individual interview protocols for volunteers, and individual interview protocols for HFR personnel.

The online survey on Google Forms ended with a question asking if the research participant would be willing to be interviewed. With the exception of one team in California where three team volunteers were available for an interview which I chose to limit to two as the two interviews gave a complete picture of the team, all who were willing and available to schedule were interviewed. Design of surveys and interview protocols followed templates from Billups' *Qualitative Collection Tools* and Lincoln's *Qualitative Research: A Field Guide for Ministry Students*.

Data Collection

An introductory meeting was held with Minda Schweizer, founder and director of HFR to discuss the project, plan data gathering, and answer questions. Individual interviews were set up

with personnel using Zoom, with consent form and interview questions provided by email before the interview.

Information about the study and a request for survey and interview participants was communicated to Home Team volunteers through their HFR coaches and then through a video explanation and request for participants on the organization's Workplace platform. Data was collected through a survey of past and present Home Team and Sponsor Circle volunteers, interviews with HFR personnel and Home Team and Sponsor Circle volunteers, documents (data collected by HFR), and artifacts (pictures, Workplace streams, newsletters, and promotional materials). The process was iterative, with an openness to adaptation as information was collected.

Surveys and individual interviews were offered to provide a full range of opportunities for data collection. Some research subjects may have appreciated the opportunity to give full answers on a survey without the time commitment of an interview, while others valued a social connection during an interview.

The link to the online survey through Google Forms was sent by coaches to present Home Team volunteers and some Sponsor Circles as well as some Home Team volunteers from past years. The survey consisted of a request for demographic information followed by 12 short-answer questions. The survey ended with a question about the respondent's willingness to be a part of an interview for follow-up questions, either individually or with other members of their Home Team. No Home Team or Sponsor Circle participants requested group interviews. The questions were open-ended instead of multiple choice to allow for responses not guided by the researcher.

Participants who offered to be a part of an individual interview were informed of the length of the semi-structured online interview and were given a link to a consent form and interview questions by email. Interviews were held online through Zoom with and followed interview protocols. Interviews were recorded and transcribed through Otter.ie and deleted after verification and editing of the transcription.

Home Team and general Workplace pages, internal HFR documents, and social media feeds were accessed as needed.

Data Analysis

The survey and interview data were coded using both a deductive and inductive approach to identify themes voiced by participants²²⁴ on the HFR's recruitment, training, and coaching and the development and changes made in the program as it adapted over time. Themes I anticipated finding were: working through principles of community development by helping without hurting, cultural differences, and the challenges of paperwork and bureaucracy. Data from surveys, interviews, artifacts, and documents were triangulated to identify key themes that emerged from the raw data.

The survey was created to allow for open-ended responses. Though most responses were complete, the interviews were the main source of information and perspective. Of the surveys, one expressed a negative experience with HFR and did not wish to be interviewed. Survey responses were exported into an Excel document and then pasted into separate Word documents and grouped within the document to identify similar responses and patterns.

²²⁴ Timothy D. Lincoln, 2021. *Qualitative Research: A Field Manual for Ministry Students*. Chicago: Atlas Open Press, 206.

I coded interviews, highlighting responses that pointed to coach and volunteer experiences of the recruiting, training, and coaching, challenges, and responses that addressed the experiences of being called, bearing the cost, and experiencing the blessing of the practice of hospitality to newcomers. as well as surprising stories or statements about participants' experiences. After identifying themes with multiple responses, I created Word documents for each theme and cut and pasted responses from interviews into each document. I then reread and created new themes and documents for remaining highlighted material that did not fit into initial themes and reread themes to eliminate overlap. Themes were transformational development, teamwork, volunteers as advocates and cultural informants, compassion and trauma, issues of faith, and personal changes through coaching or volunteering.

To fill in gaps from interviews, especially in regard to the organization's development over time, I went through HFR's Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook feeds, taking screenshots and filing pertinent information. HFR personnel provided recruitment and training PowerPoints, care plans from four Home Teams, and mid-year check-in questions and answers for two teams. I also accessed online interviews and articles.

A chronological narrative and close-up examples of teams were developed through this triangulation, with perspectives from volunteers, coaches, social media, and documents often giving a fuller explanation than one source alone provided.

Challenges

Main challenges included initial follow-up of the organization after sending the survey and explanation in November as survey links were to be sent out by coaches and the timing of data collection over Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays. HFR had experienced the departure of a key employee and were in a drive to find 100 sponsors for Ukrainians by the end of the year.

At the end of November, I communicated again with gatekeepers, and a plan was put in place to work with the Executive Administrator to send the survey links and information to the coaches at the beginning of December. On January 2, with ten surveys completed out of a goal of thirty, I posted a brief video explanation of surveys and interviews on the general Workplace page along with a link to the survey. I followed up on the 7th of January announcing that I needed ten more surveys.

Most responses were from recent volunteers from California. The initial low response rate to requests for surveys and follow-up interviews was the main challenge. As I spoke to volunteers, some asked about the participation of others on their teams and recruited them to fill in surveys, in particular Home Team 55, which is highlighted in chapter five. Some coaches also followed up after interviews with additional reminders to their teams. I did not ask survey respondents how they heard about the survey so do not have data to know who responded to the request from their coach and who responded to the Workplace announcement.

Twenty-eight out of thirty-one of survey respondents volunteered in 2022 and twelve out of thirteen volunteer interviews were with those volunteering in 2022. I had planned to have representative participation from volunteers from 2017 to 2022, including volunteers with the Family Reunification Project and Sponsor Circles. As I spoke with coaches, those who had teams from prior years as well as Sponsor Circle volunteers offered to contact volunteers, but the response rate from these groups remained low.

Though participation was limited in these ways, the interviews with coaches from these years, Elena and Jean, as well as the thirteen interviews provided rich responses from a variety of experiences. The three-month Sponsor Circle program from the perspective of volunteers is best researched outside of this case study as the recruitment and training is done outside of HFR, and

the coaching is limited by the parameters of the program. The Family Reunification Project is treated as a key part of HFR's development in the chronology. Interviews with volunteers encompassed a wide range of experiences with newcomers who came as refugees, asylum seekers, holders of Special Immigrant Visas, or under Humanitarian Parole.

Ethics

All participants gave informed consent to participate in research. Personal identifiers were removed from records after transcription of interviews except consent forms which were printed and kept in a separate location. Pseudonyms were given in the narrative of chapter four to protect privacy except for one subject, the founder of the HFR.²²⁵

Identifiers of newcomers were taken out of transcripts to ensure privacy. This project qualified for an expedited review in the institutional review process of Kairos University, which was granted upon approval of this research design.

Where I Stand

My interest in welcoming the stranger comes from personal experience as a newcomer to communities throughout my life. During my early childhood, my family lived in Norway, where my father served in communications on a US army base in Oslo. I went to preschool there and as a four-year-old had a larger Norwegian vocabulary than my parents, a typical family experience of newcomers.

During my grade school years, we were economic migrants as my father worked in the mobile home industry. We lived in apartments, mobile homes and rentals across the US, from Florida and Georgia, to South Dakota and Wyoming, to towns in North Texas, and back to Ohio

²²⁵ The founder of HFR, Minda Schweizer, is the exception as she is the sole founder and director, so anonymity is not needed or possible.

and Indiana as our family of six. We were always newcomers and often in need of help. We usually received gifts from the welcome wagon; I remember a growing collection of shoe horns and plastic combs. Sometimes we received more tangible gifts like the Thanksgiving turkey from next door neighbors in South Dakota and the Baptist pastor who added our isolated mobile home to his Sunday morning bus route. Other times, we drifted in and out, managing on our own.

We would eventually return to my father's birthplace, Fort Wayne, Indiana, where we had the support of family, though we would continue moving from house to apartment to house through my high school years. My parents would own their own place and be truly settled much later.

My own choices led my husband and me to work cross-culturally in Gabon, Africa, and France for nineteen years. I learned French as an adult, which meant that I always had an identifiable accent. During our eleven years in Gabon, I was a visible outsider, often the only non-African in settings throughout the day—on the street, in the taxi bus, at the market, in church. My Gabonese friends gave practical help and welcome, and strangers often looked out for me. In France I could pass as French on the street until I spoke. My children, in time, would come to speak better French than I. My French friends and international French-speaking community encouraged me to serve and speak even with an accent.

When we moved back to the US, to Fort Wayne, Indiana, I found work in translation services, staying with the world of newcomers. We hosted a family through HFR in 2019-2020, and I did contract work with HFR for several months in 2020, having contact with two sponsorship groups as they navigated the effects of COVID-19 restrictions on the sponsorship relationship.

My choice to pursue this research is based on my lifelong experience as a newcomer. My experiences are different from those forcibly displaced though. My family lived a protected life as American military personnel in Oslo. Though we were economic migrants, we spoke the same language and always had a place we could go back to have family support. Moving overseas as an expat comes with choices and options. We were opting into the challenges we faced and could leave at any time.

My life experiences and passions are both a challenge and an opportunity in this research. I am not a passive onlooker, but a champion for strong communities of welcome. My experience of sponsoring through HFR will aid the connection and communication during interviews as I am a participant in the experience. My hope is that community sponsorship would succeed for the flourishing of all involved. Staying open to honest short-comings will be important during the research process. Criswell writes that in qualitative research, the researcher's experience shapes everything from their choice of a question, to data collection, to interpretation of data and allows for interweaving themselves into the text.²²⁶

The disadvantage is that my personal experiences and passions may have skewed my interpretation of data. Rigorous coding and academic support from my dissertation team help mitigate my biases. However, challenges aside, I believe my personal experiences and interest made this a richer, more textured case study.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this case study of HFR's community sponsorship program explores its development from the founding to the present and the experience of sponsors through a variety of sources of data: surveys, interviews, organizational documents, and artifacts. Though limited

²²⁶ Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research*, 49.

in scope, my hope is that the results of this study will inform and encourage the rapidly growing movement of community sponsorship in the US and lead to further research, especially of the experiences of the newcomers who are doing the challenging work of rebuilding their lives in a new country.

Chapter Four: The Founding and Development of HFR

The US government's policies and response to the Syrian refugee crisis, asylum-seekers at the US/Mexico border, the fall of Kabul, and the war in Ukraine together constitute the soil in which HFR was planted and has grown. Individual responses to local, national, and international realities and events from the founder, staff, and volunteers led to the development of an organization with a wide influence on the private resettlement of refugees in the US. This research studies the development and practice of HFR's Home Teams from 2017 to 2022 through a case study approach. The research questions are:

1. What external and internal factors led to HFR's current model of recruitment, training, and coaching?
2. How did HFR's recruiting, training, and coaching adapt to its current practice?
3. How do Home Team Volunteers and HFR coaches experience the recruiting, training, and coaching process?
4. What challenges do the Home Teams face and how does HFR aid them?
5. What is the interplay between individuals, teams, and an organization being called, bearing the cost, and experiencing the blessing of the practice of hospitality to newcomers?

The chapter's narrative is presented chronologically, tracing the development of HFR through world events and political realities from 2015 to 2022. Each year begins with a description of the world events and political decisions that were the setting for HFR's

beginnings, development, and work within the field of immigration. Then, the personal narratives of key HFR staff follow, adding to the chronological narrative from the perspectives of Minda, HFR's founder, Elena, who began work for HFR in 2019, and Jean, who volunteered on two teams in 2018 before becoming a Home Team Coach. Other descriptions of HFR's development were included alongside the personal narratives. The narratives of four coaches were added in 2022 as HFR expanded rapidly in response to the Afghan crisis. These narratives illustrate the personal experiences and responses of individuals to the realities of immigration realities and policy that led to the founding and development of HFR.

2015-2016

The Setting

In March of 2011 the government of Syria suppressed pro-democracy demonstrations throughout the country with violence.²²⁷ By 2015, the civil war had led to the death of 250,000 people. Out of twelve million who fled their homes, four million had left the country. Most sought refuge in Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon, while hundreds of thousands made their way to Europe.²²⁸

Worldwide attention to the ongoing crisis was galvanized by the photo of Syrian toddler Alan Kurdi, who drowned on September 2, with twelve others trying to escape to Europe. Public pressure swayed governments in Europe and Canada to open the doors to refugee resettlement. In the US, the Obama administration responded with a pledge to accept 10,000 Syrian refugees. At the same time, terrorism by Muslim extremists called into question the decisions of

²²⁷ Britannica, "Syrian Civil War," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 5 Jan. 2023, www.britannica.com/event/Syrian-Civil-War. Accessed 6 February 2023.

²²⁸ Britannica, "Syrian Civil War."

governments to resettle Syrians. On November 15, 2015, terrorists killed 130 and wounded 494 in a coordinated attack at six locations in Paris. ISIS claimed responsibility. On December 2, in San Bernardino, California, a radicalized Muslim couple killed 14 and injured 22.

In late 2015, a meme began to circulate on social media with a picture of M&Ms and the statement, “If I had a bowl that was filled with 10,000 M&M’s but I told you that 10 of them were deadly poison, would you eat a handful? This is how I feel about Syrian refugees.”

By the end of 2015, a record of 1.3 million people had applied for asylum in European countries.²²⁹ Over one million migrants had arrived by sea, half from Syria, 200,000 from Afghanistan and 70,000 from Iraq.²³⁰ While public goodwill and action to welcome refugees rose with the picture of Alan Kurdi, terrorism and anti-Muslim sentiment increased fears and anti-immigration sentiment.

Minda

Minda Schweizer had just finished a Masters of Divinity after years of work with a campus student ministry. She was an ordained minister in the Presbyterian church, and a community pastor to immigrants. As the Outreach Director at her church, Minda worked with the SoCal World Relief²³¹ resettlement office and churches to resettle two families through their team model, Good Neighbor Teams. She enjoyed the practical work of giving the newcomers a

²²⁹ Pew Research Center, *Number of Refugees to Europe Surges to Record 1.3 Million in 2015, August 2, 2016, Accessed March 10, 2023.* www.pewresearch.org/global/2016/08/02/number-of-refugees-to-europe-surges-to-record-1-3-million-in-2015/.

²³⁰ Jonathan Clayton and Hereward Holland, *Over one million sea arrivals reach Europe in 2015, December 30, 2015, UNHCR The UN Refugee Agency, USA, Accessed March 10, 2023.*

www.unhcr.org/en-us/news/latest/2015/12/5683d0b56/million-sea-arrivals-reach-europe-2015.html.

²³¹ World Relief is the humanitarian arm of the National Association of Evangelicals. In the US, World Relief’s work focuses on refugees and other vulnerable immigrants. They are one of the nine US resettlement agencies.

good start and was moved as she considered how “traumatic it would be to be forced to leave her home and how beneficial it would be to have a team to ease the transition into a new country.”²³²

When the Syrian crisis hit, she wrestled with her convictions about the scriptural call to welcome contrasting with the unwelcoming response of some churches. She wondered if American Christians were “mainly worried or scared or unsure how to do it.” She also knew the American church had welcomed many thousands of Vietnamese refugees in the 70s, yet that personal extension of welcome by congregations was not a part of current practice.

I'd hear a couple stories from.... churches saying, “I remember during the Vietnam War when our church helped resettle a Vietnamese family, and it was very meaningful. They had a good experience. I just didn't hear a follow up to that conversation, that second part, saying, “And now we're doing it again.” And there wasn't a negative, it wasn't like, “I don't want to do it again,” but...there was a tone of I don't know how.”²³³

Minda saw the potential of teams. They were available in ways that a caseworker with a resettlement agency couldn't be, and they grew as they were coached through their six months of commitment with World Relief. She saw the challenges too. “It gets complicated when you're in a helper...relationship. It could end in hurt feelings, and then you don't want to do it ever again.” Working with teams was messy, “It's evening and weekends. They get it wrong. They get right.”²³⁴ The volunteer teams shared in accomplishing the tasks of resettlement with the resettlement agency and led to a wider circle of support for the newcomers.²³⁵

²³² Minda Schweizer, interview with author, Zoom, March 3, 2022.

²³³ Minda Schweizer, “Guerline Jozef—Getting to Know Minda Schweizer,” Interview by Guerline Jozef, Story Corps, January 8, 2020, archive.storycorps.org/interviews/guerline-jozef-getting-to-know-minda-schweizer/.

²³⁴ Minda Schweizer.

²³⁵ Minda Schweizer, interview with author, November 11, 2022, Zoom.

Minda's family had their own immigrant story that gave her empathy for those arriving in the US. At the turn of the century, her mother's family had come to the US from Sweden and settled in Illinois.

They started out as in the traditional immigrant occupations. They were bakers, and so, service people. We have stories of family conflict, of fathers leaving families and running away... just the hardships of the first generation here, trying to make it your new home. And my mother, every Christmas day, she makes Swedish food. We have a Swedish smorgasbord... We thought it was the best food ever. She would talk about it like, it was the food for the kings...

But later on, in college when, you know, I'm learning about history and ...just different peoples, I began to realize that the food we had every Christmas Day is the food that our immigrant, our immigrant family a couple generations ago would serve. And it was actually poor people's food, poor Swedish people's food. There's meatballs, basic cheeses, and bread. But that meal has been preserved over a couple generations. And we still celebrate this.²³⁶

Minda's empathy with the trauma that newcomers go through in relocating to a new home led her to use her life experience and skills in a way that would lead to flourishing for the newcomers and the volunteers. She identified a problem she perceived in the church, a position of not being welcoming, and worked to recruit and coach teams to welcome newcomers with the desire that, if done well, a culture of welcome would continue and spread.

Elena

Elena, an International Relations major at a private Christian university, was reading about the Syrian refugee crisis and knew she wanted to do something about it. "But as a college student, I feel like just as an individual, when you hear about a crisis like that, you don't really know what you can do to help." When she had an overseas opportunity for an internship with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, she took it and was able to volunteer at

²³⁶ Minda Schweizer, interview with Guerline Jozef.

refugee camps on the border of Jordan and Syria. At the end of her internship, she continued with the International Rescue Commission. When I asked about her experiences there, she said,

In Jordan, the sentiment from the Jordanians was that refugees were harming the economy, ruining the opportunities that they had...because no one wants to have the refugee camps. Something that we hear about is just how much crime, rape, and injustices happened within the camps. But you have a lot of people that don't have the opportunity to go to school, they aren't allowed to work, and you put them in a camp for several months. I returned to the US, and when I graduated, I just knew that I wanted to continue doing that work.

Elena's extended family had fled El Salvador while her mother stayed behind with her grandparents in the 80s, anticipating the stay would "be only until the war died down... hopefully, just a couple of years." But by the time peace treaties were signed, her uncles had been living most of their adult lives in the US. So, Elena moved to stay with extended family in California, and volunteered with World Relief until she received her work permit. She began salaried work in the resettlement program with World Relief in January of 2017.²³⁷

Elena had initially resisted studies related to immigration during her first years at school. As a Latina Spanish-speaker, it was expected of her, but she felt empathy for Syrian refugees and had the skills to qualify for an internship that put her face-to-face with those suffering because of the crisis. Her family history of immigration because of war in El Salvador would spur her work in later years with asylum seekers.

Jean

Jean grew up in Jewish home and came to faith in Jesus in high school. When an opportunity opened for her to get her PhD in Germany, she had taken it without learning the language before she left.

²³⁷ Elena, interview with author, Zoom, January 11, 2023. Besides the founder of Home for Refugees, Minda Schweizer, all research participants were given code names for research storage and organization and pseudonyms for the report of the case study.

I do know...I have a gift for languages. I'm a musician. And I think that helps. I knew that I would learn German. But I mean, I got off the plane having practiced saying to my teacher, "I'm so looking forward, or I'm so pleased to meet you," I'd practice just that sentence, I knew almost no German at all. And then I moved to Israel to work after my time in Germany.

It came about relatively unexpectedly that a job that I had applied for I got. I moved, and I didn't have time to do a language course. I think that one of the things that came up very, very strongly in my emotions, in my gut was being in Israel, and having to speak English and wanting to have a sign around my neck saying, "Don't judge me. I speak two other languages."²³⁸

With her firsthand experience of moving to a new country, Jean knew how difficult relocating could be even under the best of circumstances. She felt empathy for the plight of refugees forced to flee their homes and saw the reception that they received wasn't always positive. Through a Google search, she found the World Relief office in Orange county and went through training to serve as a volunteer with refugees.²³⁹

Jean had engaged in work with the marginalized throughout her life. She spoke of her motivation for work in racial justice, homelessness, and reconciliation in Israel and Palestine,

I think it's a combination of my faith, but I think that I would feel this way without faith because I think I did before. Just looking at the world and seeing the vast inequality and inequity that exists in our country, in our society, or world and just wanting to mitigate that as much as possible to do my part. I mean, if for no other reason, it's what Jesus tells us to do. Matthew 25, "What you do for the least of these you do to me or for me."

2017-2018

The Setting

On January 27, 2017, President Trump issued an Executive Order, "Protecting the Nation from Foreign Terrorist Entry into the United States," that suspended the resettlement of refugees from Syria, paused the resettlement program for 120 days, and banned entry to the US of those

²³⁸ Jean, interview with author, Zoom, December 12, 2022.

²³⁹ Jean.

from seven majority Muslim countries.²⁴⁰ The US would admit 53,716 refugees in fiscal year 2017, a number 37% lower than the previous year.²⁴¹ In February, 2018, the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services changed its mission to eliminate the phrase describing the US as “a nation of immigrants.”²⁴² The phrase had been in use since John F. Kennedy popularized it in speeches and in his book, *A Nation of Immigrants*.

From May 7 to June 20, 2018, the Department of Justice implemented a “zero-tolerance policy” to prosecute all cases of unauthorized entry at the US-Mexico border. Parents were referred for prosecution and children were designated as Unaccompanied Alien Children and sent to the custody of the Office of Refugee Resettlement facilities across the US. During this time, 2648 children were separated from their parents, and one hundred fifty-eight parents were deported without their children.²⁴³ Separations ended after a public outcry.

The 2018 cap on refugee resettlement was set at 30,000 and 22,533 were resettled. In a survey on attitudes towards immigration, Americans listed immigration among their top concerns, with deep disagreement over immigration policies and the impact of immigration on American society.²⁴⁴

²⁴⁰ *Executive Order 13769 of January 27, 2017, Protecting the Nation from Foreign Terrorist Entry to the United States*. 2017. Federal Register.

²⁴¹ Migration Policy Institute, *US Annual Refugee Resettlement Ceilings and Number of Refugees Admitted, 1980-Present*, Accessed April 13, 2023, www.migrationpolicy.org/programs/data-hub/charts/us-refugee-resettlement.

²⁴² Gonzales, Richard, “America No Longer A 'Nation of Immigrants' USCIS Says,” NPR, February 22, 2018. Accessed on August 14, 2020.

²⁴³ Child Separations by Trump Administration, Staff Report, Committee on Oversight and Reform, US House of Representatives. July 2019. www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/GOVPUB-OTHER-PURL-gpo126261/pdf/GOVPUB-OTHER-PURL-gpo126261.pdf.

²⁴⁴ “A Nation of Immigrants? Diverging Perceptions of Immigrants Increasingly Marking Partisan Divides,” *PRRI* (March 12, 2019). www.prri.org/research/a-nation-of-immigrants-diverging-perceptions-of-immigrants-increasingly-marking-partisan-divides/.

Elena

Elena had just begun her job at World Relief and felt the effect of the executive order.

It meant that we were no longer going to be receiving as many refugees as we were expecting. And all I thought was, “They’re going to fire me.” They just hired me thinking, “We expect this number of refugees,” and all of a sudden there are no refugees whatsoever. I remember during those years, we saw complete agencies closed down, especially with agencies that relied mostly on federal funding.

Thankfully, World Relief also provided immigration and legal services. They took everyone who was doing reception and placement services, trained everyone at the same time, and then they just carried us to the Immigration Department. People who had 40 years of experience doing refugee resettlement, all of a sudden, were all on an even field. We were all being trained at the same time.²⁴⁵

She threw herself into the work, working weekends and after hours, becoming the program coordinator for their events. She managed relationships with embassies as she worked with Spanish-speaking immigrants through their citizenship or DACA process. At the end of her first year, she enrolled in a translation and interpretation certificate program to enable her to continue working in the US.²⁴⁶

Minda

José Serrano at World Relief encouraged Minda to start a non-profit so she could work with resettlement agencies in Southern California that were still receiving refugees. She registered HFR as a 501c3 and began working with other resettlement agencies by finding teams, which she called Home Teams, to welcome newcomers. Geography led to openness and ease in partnering. Home Teams could fill gaps and relieve pressure on overwhelmed resettlement

²⁴⁵ Elena.

²⁴⁶ Elena.

agencies. Refugees were resettled within 100 miles of the resettlement agency they were placed through. While in smaller cities, placement was often within an easy drive of the agency, in Los Angeles, it could take a caseworker two hours to get to a client's home.

Minda said about beginning HFR,

I really think God was behind it because it just felt like there was hardly any banging doors down. I felt like there was a wind of helpful people along the way. And then it was trial and error. I just hyper-focused on everything. I'm hyper-focused on a team with one family and doing it efficiently.

She said no to ideas that didn't fit the vision, ideas like setting up a food pantry or furniture storage, and with each team she adjusted and refined the process.²⁴⁷

Jean

I remember seeing these comments from social media, "If somebody gave you a jar of M&Ms, and one was poison, would you give that jar to your kids? It doesn't. It's not. It's apples and oranges. These are human beings. We talk to them, we get to know them. And we take appropriate action if you find that there's one that's bringing harm.

That's how I felt. And then, on top of that, obviously, when the Trump administration came in not only the official policy of government policy, but the ugliness and the hate and the vitriol that came out, that was allowed to resurface or was as a result of our president using that kind of language, and having that kind of attitude, that it became not only acceptable, but cool in some circles to hate the foreigner, hate the newcomer, hate the alien and stranger.

Jean had completed her training at World Relief and still wanted to find a way to volunteer with refugees. Hearing from a friend about HFR, Jean contacted Minda who told her she was recruiting a team for an Afghan family arriving through a resettlement agency. The team of seven didn't know one another, "So I think that there were two women who knew each other really well. And then two women who were from the same church, and then one woman who was kind of came on by herself. And then my friend and I."²⁴⁸ For Jean and this Home Team, the

²⁴⁷ Minda Schweizer, March 3, 2022.

²⁴⁸ Jean.

year's commitment ended unexpectedly when the family relocated after four months, “they disappeared for a while.”²⁴⁹

First Home Teams

During the year-long commitment, Home Teams followed a care plan that outlined tasks, timelines, and assignments. Each team member had an area of responsibility. Tasks were categorized under: housing, arrival, health and social services, transportation, ESL, finances, and employment. The team received training about the care plan, cultural issues, and respecting the autonomy of the family by not rushing in to help when they could equip the family to find their own solutions. They would raise money or find donations as needs arose. Teams met in person regularly and communicated with the resettled family through WhatsApp.

Three teams formed when Minda spoke with an interested group at a Presbyterian church about forming Home Teams for three arriving Afghan refugee families. The team members knew each other well from serving in outreach activities through the church and attending Sunday school together. Nancy had been the missions elder chair and had begun teaching ESL in her retirement. For her, as a life-long “mission person,” responding to this need made sense. And it was something she could do with her husband. She described the team as,

Well, probably six of us, because the people that volunteered were all couples. One was an accountant who was going to help go over things that needed filling out that had to do with finances and stuff. And there was somebody who taught in a school district and was going to help with schooling or whatever that need was. We had a nurse who was going to help with medical problems.²⁵⁰

Human Rights Watch, located in Maryland, called HFR in May asking for help finding shelter for a Chechnyan family escaping persecution.

²⁴⁹ Jean. The family eventually returned, and the daughter texted Jean. They are still in touch.

²⁵⁰ Nancy, interview with author, Zoom, January 3, 2023.

A and B, and their two kids...had to flee their home abruptly in Grozny, Chechnya, because A learned that he and his family were about to “disappear” the next day. A was part of the state philharmonic playing for...the head of the Chechen Republic. This meant A could only perform for the state and was minimally paid.

When A asked to resign in order to play concerts elsewhere, Kadyrov called in M D, who is known in the news for torture and executions... and tortured him. Once he learned of his ultimate fate, he and his family were able to escape Chechnya into Russia and then fly to Mexico to ask for asylum protection at the United States-Mexico border.²⁵¹

The mother and two children had just been released from detention and were in nearby Costa Mesa. The father was in immigration detention in Texas. Minda e-mailed Phyllis, the Chair of the Peace and Justice Commission for the Presbyterian church, about forming a team.²⁵² The father of the family had worked with the philharmonic, so she called Jean too, thinking she would be a good fit.²⁵³ Couples from four churches formed the team, and one couple sponsored the father to get him released from detention with the legal help of Jose Serrano, board member of HFR and Associate Director of Immigration and Outreach at World Relief Southern California.²⁵⁴

This was the first case of a Home Team coming around a family seeking asylum, without time to do a series of training and without the benefit of a resettlement agency’s support and funding for the family in the initial months of resettlement. Minda met with the team regularly, problem-solving and helping them understand that their primary role was not fundraising but

²⁵¹ Home for Refugees, “Homecomings and Updates: December 2019,” December 2019, mailchi.mp/5466e0603290/home-for-refugees-sep-2018-homecomings-and-updates-3957674?fbclid=IwAR1242_XgW3rGlizBwlfliQ8ENIj_NqqnfTTYokGktnuxpXTYmbmsoYqXL4.

²⁵² Home Team Survey response.

²⁵³ Jean.

²⁵⁴ Home for Refugees, “Homecomings and Updates: December 2019.”

learning needs and helping the family connect with resources and services.²⁵⁵ Jean recalls often turning to Minda, who would either know what to do or would know where to find answers. Jean spoke of the resilience and the joy of this Home Team and family, that stayed together for two years, the typical length of team commitment in asylum cases, as she recalled,

I think the challenge is almost always where we are in housing. And it's just so dang expensive where we live. And the wife in this family was a 27- year old mom of two at the time... so unbelievably resilient and self-sufficient. She wound up finding the apartment, but then getting it furnished was so much about the team.

I mean, they, through HFR, but using resources that came from the team's church... the move in was just, it was great. I mean, it was so much. It was so exciting to see the apartment fill and to see their joy. It's stuff that they needed. And it was very fun.²⁵⁶

Other teams were formed and were matched with refugee and asylum-seeking families through Minda's networks with faith communities. The International Institute of Los Angeles (IILA) turned to HFR to resettle a refugee family from Guatemala when they reached their refugee resettlement limit of 2018.²⁵⁷ HFR's Home Team program was beginning to fill the gap between limits on resettlement and reduced agency capacity in the greater Los Angeles area.

Elena

World Relief was working to sponsor Elena to work long-term. They had paid for an attorney and completed her labor certification with the department of labor. In a new executive order, the work program that she was applying for "just completely disappeared."

I moved back to El Salvador. I was here for about six months. And it was really hard being back home just because even though I was born and raised here, I never got to experience what it was like to work here. So, when I arrived and I applied for all these

²⁵⁵ Home Team Survey response.

²⁵⁶ Jean.

²⁵⁷ Home for Refugees USA, 2018, "Did you know that in one year since Home for Refugees has started we've grown to 50 volunteers?" Facebook, September 18, 2018. www.facebook.com/homeforrefugeesusa/photos/pb.100068143634386.-2207520000./468210520281871/?type=3.

jobs, my thinking was, “I’m going to save money. I’m going to go back, I’m going to go to law school and all these things.

As I’m applying for jobs here, the most that I get offered was \$1,000. I remember I came home and I told my mom like \$1,000 a month and my mom’s like, “That’s a great salary! You should be thankful.”

Tree of Life

On October 27, a gunman attacked the Tree of Life synagogue, which housed three Jewish congregations, in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, killing eleven people and wounding six.²⁵⁸ The shooter had expressed anti-Semitic views on a social media site, Gab, including the charge that, “HIAS, (the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society) likes to bring invaders in that kill our people.”²⁵⁹ The Dor Hadesh congregation, one of the three at Tree of Life, was a partner of HIAS and listed on the HIAS website.²⁶⁰ Researchers had noted Anti-Semitic attacks from far-right users of Instagram and Twitter spiking in the months in August and September.²⁶¹ The HIAS National Refugee Shabbat had been held the previous weekend, with the goal of, “creating a Shabbat experience dedicated to refugees.”²⁶²

²⁵⁸ Gillispie, Mark Scolforo and Mark, 2018, "Pittsburgh Synagogue Massacre Leaves 11 Dead, 6 Wounded," *AP News*, Accessed February 15, 2023. apnews.com/article/shootings-north-america-us-news-ap-top-news-massacres-23b04dc5e5af4129b544ab50cbba3dd6.

²⁵⁹ Gillispie and Scolforo, "Pittsburgh Synagogue;" HIAS, the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society, founded in 1902, is the world’s oldest refugee agency. Originally founded by Jews to help fellow Jews, it now works worldwide and with the displaced of any origin.

²⁶⁰ Megan Guza, October 24, 2019, *Undaunted by Tree of Life attack, HIAS continues its mission*, The Jerusalem Post, Accessed March 11, 2023. www.jpost.com/diaspora/antisemitism/undaunted-by-tree-of-life-attack-hias-continues-its-mission-605654.

²⁶¹ David Ingram, October 27, 2018, *Attacks on Jewish people rising on Instagram and Twitter, researchers say*, NBC News, Accessed March 11, 2023. [web.archive.org/web/20181103050153/https://www.nbcnews.com/tech/tech-news/attacks-jewish-people-rising-instagram-twitter-researchers-say-n925086](https://www.nbcnews.com/tech/tech-news/attacks-jewish-people-rising-instagram-twitter-researchers-say-n925086).

²⁶² Paula Reed Ward, Rich Lord, and Liz Navatril, October 27, 2018, *ATF, bomb squad and local police arrive at Whitehall residence linked to mass shooting suspect Robert Bowers*, Pittsburgh Post Gazette, Accessed March 11, 2023. www.post-gazette.com/news/crime-courts/2018/10/27/squirrel-hill-synagogue-shooting-suspect-pittsburgh-mass-officers-victims-casualties/stories/201810270072.

A childhood friend worked with Minda to create a fundraising campaign to help Jewish synagogues and community centers resettle refugees in memory of the victims. HFR shared her words in a Facebook post,

My father and his family are from Pittsburgh. His great grandfather was one of the founding members of the Tree of Life synagogue in the 1860s. He and other immigrants came to this country to escape poverty, violence and anti-Semitism. My family has been connected to TOL for 5 generations.

The man responsible for the murderous rampage that took place on Saturday believed that Jews should be killed because we are willing to support refugees escaping the same poverty, violence and persecution that brought my family to this country.

The Torah instructs us 36 times to care for the stranger — far more than it commands us to observe the Sabbath or any other law. Tree of Life was founded on these values and no amount of hatred, violence or despair will cause us to renounce these values.

I ask you to honor the 11 victims of this senseless tragedy by giving to an organization that helps refugees. That can be your local church, synagogue or mosque. Give to HIAS or Home for Refugees USA.

As it is written in Exodus, 'You shall not wrong nor oppress a stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.'²⁶³

Growth and Partnerships

2018 had been a year of growth and increasing partnerships. By mid-year, HFR had worked with over fifty volunteers through Home Teams. Partnerships with the Jewish community and Presbyterian churches were particularly strong, with one Presbyterian church having participated in seven Home Teams. In May, HFR held its first annual gala where guests heard newcomers' stories and HFR's mission while they experienced an Afghan meal. Minda represented HFR on a World Refugee Day Regional Roundtable on a panel on refugee

²⁶³ Home for Refugees USA, Facebook, October 29, 2018, "Starting a fundraising campaign to help Jewish synagogues and community centers resettle refugee families in the memory of the Tree of Life victims." www.facebook.com/homeforrefugeesusa/photos/pb.100068143634386.-2207520000./588545474915041/?type=3.

resettlement,²⁶⁴ and HFR became a member of the Refugee Forum of Los Angeles in September.²⁶⁵

2019

The Setting

Thirty thousand refugees were admitted in fiscal year 2019.²⁶⁶ The Department of Homeland Security issued a report in November stating that due to IT deficiencies, they could not accurately determine the total number of families separated during the Zero Tolerance period, estimating that 3,014 children were separated, of which 2,155 were reunified with their families.²⁶⁷

Family Reunification

In December, Minda and her daughter had traveled to Tijuana with Orange County World Relief and their art therapy program, Little Brushstrokes, led by Jose Serrano from World Relief, to do art with the children of parents who were at the border seeking asylum.²⁶⁸ They made bead

²⁶⁴ Home for Refugees USA, Facebook, June 20, 2018, “Join us at 2018 **#WorldRefugeeDay** Regional Roundtable at LA City Hall this Thursday.” www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=489883848114538&set=pb.100068143634386.-2207520000.

²⁶⁵ Home for Refugees USA, Facebook, September 27, 2018, “One of the faith groups who has modeled loving your neighbor well has been Trinity United Presbyterian Church in Santa Ana.” www.facebook.com/homeforrefugeesusa/posts/pfbid0VQ6rvXyFve9Ksy2NFgnTVzqDCnqFHCWZWM6BddBFAs2PfsJk4cXLdP36XExDWJRgl.

²⁶⁶ Migration Policy Institute, “U.S. Annual Refugee Resettlement Ceilings and Numbers of Refugees Admitted, 1980-PresentU,” Accessed April 8, 2022, www.migrationpolicy.org/programs/data-hub/charts/us-refugee-resettlement.

²⁶⁷ U.S. Department of Homeland Security, “DHS Lacked Technology Needed to Successfully Account for Separated Migrant Families,” November 25, 2019, www.oig.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/assets/2019-11/OIG-20-06-Nov19.pdf

²⁶⁸ Home for Refugees USA, Facebook, December 4, 2018, “It’s early!” www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=608152746287647&set=pb.100068143634386.-2207520000.

bracelets and colored while parents waited in line for World Relief and Al Otro Lado's legal services. Plans were made to visit again.

In February of 2019, twenty-nine families from Central America arrived at the US/Mexico border to apply for asylum and be reunited with their children. Al Otro Lado, a bi-national legal organization providing legal assistance in Tijuana had found 29 families in their home countries, listened to their stories, recognized their claims for legal asylum, obtained visas for them to travel through Mexico, and hosted them near Tijuana. Now they needed sponsors.

Minda traveled to the border again later in February with her daughter with Jose Serrano and the Director of World Relief Southern California. Brought to a local motel by Al Otro Lado, Minda was introduced to the families, to her surprise, as the person who would find their sponsor families.²⁶⁹ The group at the end of the day was in shock but determined to find twenty-nine sponsors.²⁷⁰ To enter the US, each family would need a sponsor who would be legally responsible for them.²⁷¹ World Relief put the word out through social media and held informational sessions that reached beyond the Los Angeles area, screening and matching sponsors to families. HFR agreed to lead the effort to coach Home Teams. Within weeks, sponsors had been found across the US.

On March 5, Al Otro Lado, with the assistance of Together Rising, Families Belong Together, and Matthew 25, brought the families to the border to ask for asylum. All 29 were

²⁶⁹ Personal communication with Minda Schweizer.

²⁷⁰ The Presbytery of Los Ranchos, "A Home for Refugees; Twenty-nine Families, In Fact," March 27, 2019. losranchos.org/2019/03/a-home-for-refugees-twenty-nine-families-in-fact/. Accessed February 16, 2023.

²⁷¹ Home for Refugees, "Homecomings and Updates: January-March 2019," mailchi.mp/167f0e2332a1/home-for-refugees-sep-2018-homecomings-and-updates-332161?fbclid=IwAR36xdzVOs91ndKBBvraFHm-YFWFY2miIWK8_flzxGhGTjHuZvNITLF0X4.

allowed into the US in the evening and placed in detention to have their cases heard.²⁷² By the beginning of April, fourteen of the parents had been released from detention to their sponsor hosts and either reunified with their children or in the process.²⁷³

Elena

Elena had moved back to California from El Salvador and enrolled in school in January. New employees had been hired to fulfill her previous responsibilities at World Relief, so she was babysitting, doing court interpretation, and working as a receptionist at a law firm.

I remember I called my mom right after that receptionist job...if I came to the US just to be a receptionist, it's not that there's anything wrong with it...but I like to work in my career. I should have just stayed home and been a receptionist over there where I could get paid less, but save more, because I'm not paying for rent.

And as we're having that conversation, I'm getting another call. And it was my former boss at World Relief. And then that's when he told me about the Reunification Project and that this is collaborative. And he had already suggested it to me, so he was saying, "They're going to call you. For right now, I can only promise you three months."

I think it was like 16 hours a week or something like that. It was something very, very minimum...When this started they kept thinking oh, it's only six months until the families get their work permits...²⁷⁴

Elena was hired as the reimbursement specialist for the Family Reunification Project. A fund was in place to help with needs for the families, and her role was to make it last as long as possible, encouraging teams to lean on community resources.

Family Reunification Project

With the rapid need and limited response time, Minda adapted her ideal of a Home Team of five to at least one volunteer and two staff members to support the newcomers. Structures and systems needed to be quickly scaled up. HFR coaching had been face-to-face in living and dining

²⁷² The Presbytery of Los Ranchos, "A Home for Refugees."

²⁷³ Home for Refugees, "Homecomings and Updates: January- March 2019."

²⁷⁴ Elena.

rooms in Southern California; now the organization needed to adapt to distance. She texted and called sponsors, encouraging them to build teams and set up systems of communication on Workplace, a business communication platform through Meta that functioned like Facebook and provided a place for teams and coaches to communicate asynchronously outside of text and email. Elena communicated with both sponsors and families. Jean began coaching teams outside of the Family Reunification Project.

The first months were difficult. Initial communication in informational sessions with World Relief had included discussion of possible stipends for sponsors. Some sponsors thought they had only signed up for three months. Elena's work was to call and communicate the guidelines, establish systems for reimbursement, and help people find community resources in settings across the US.

Whereas Elena thrived in systems that were organized and well-defined, the Family Reunification Project called for flexibility and the creation of structure. At first, she struggled to find a balance between work and home life. As the main contact for the newcomers, she began feeling a "savior complex...if I don't answer my phone...things will fall, or people won't get the assistance they needed."²⁷⁵

SoCal Home Team

Elena was hired part-time at HFR in April of 2019 and coached teams face-to-face while continuing her role in the Family Reunification Project through World Relief. One of her Home Teams accompanied a young mother from Guatemala, Norma, who had come as a refugee

²⁷⁵ Elena.

through the International Rescue Committee in LA. Minda's community came together to meet an urgent need for furniture,

A friend from my son's school moved and donated some of her furniture so I rented a truck and brought over the furniture. Then another volunteer from another Home Team donated her 2 couches. With these furniture donations, we almost filled their new home. Shortly after that, their Home Team created a Wish List on Amazon and sent it out to their friends to help. Within 24 hours everything was purchased for them. These were a few small effects, but I knew they were more than furniture, they represented new life and hope.²⁷⁶

HFR coaches equipped Home Teams but were also quick to help in meeting urgent needs. When social services told Norma that her children needed to be in childcare when she had her appointments, Elena drove them to several programs nearby. Though the directors of the childcare programs were kind, the programs were expensive and had long waitlists. Minda shared in a newsletter,

They tried one last time and when they went into the facility the director said they had a spot open up that he had tried to fill all morning but not one person would respond on their waitlist. After he heard their story he said it must be for you, and even though it's just one we'll make it work for two. We will also provide all the meals and supplies you need for free, and I have a friend next door who runs a clinic and he can provide for some of your medical needs.²⁷⁷

Funding and Growth

HFR and the Orange County Jewish Coalition for Refugees held two fundraising dinners in 2019 for their organizations. The "Refugee Chef Test Kitchen" dinners were held at private homes and cost \$72 a person, to benefit the newcomer caterer and resettlement work of OCJCR and HFR. Minda shared on HFR's Facebook page,

Aeisha, her husband, and her four children are one of the families that have just finished their year in Home for Refugee's #resettlement program partnering with

²⁷⁶ Home for Refugees, "Homecomings and Updates: June 19, 2019," mailchi.mp/ded5219e0c3a/home-for-refugees-sep-2018-homecomings-and-updates-410645.

²⁷⁷ Home for Refugees, "Homecomings and Updates: June 19, 2019."

a #community #volunteer #team. They came from #Kabul, #Afghanistan. We are grateful for her husband's service to the US government back in Afghanistan which put him and his family's lives at risk which led our government to relocate them here.

Aeisha's family's community volunteer team partnered with her family for one year. In addition to the team helping her husband get a job through their networks, helping her with #ESL and going to school herself for the first time, helping them enroll their children in school and understand the public school system, helping them understand how to pay bills and keep up with America's paperwork, just to name a few, we've been encouraging Aeisha with #catering opportunities to contribute to her family's income.²⁷⁸

Aeisha used the money she earned at the first event to purchase professional chafing dishes as she grew her business.²⁷⁹

HFR's 2nd Annual Gala spotlighted the work of Haitian Bridge Alliance with Guerline Jozef-Kozlovski, the Executive Director, speaking about their work of humanitarian support for asylum seekers. Jose Serrano from World Relief had connected Minda and Guerline in 2019, seeing the possibility of helping one another through their organizations.²⁸⁰ HBA worked with asylum-seekers with legal processes and housing, HFR's Home teams could accompany asylum seekers.

2019 had been a year of rapid growth. By the end of 2019, HFR was working with 35 families across the US, 29 with the Family Reunification Project and six local Home Teams,

²⁷⁸ Home for Refugees USA, Facebook post, August 19, 2019, "Last Sunday, #HomeForRefugees and Orange County Jewish Coalition for Refugees, with Jackie Menter and Nancy Neudorf, hosted a Refugee #ChefDinner highlighting the #cooking of Aeisha*, one of the #Afghan #refugee#women in our program,"
www.facebook.com/homeforrefugeesusa/posts/pfbid0WWrz4FFQmcHco8FuvLunM7wPRovZJH57izFA2Pg3jesNuP9iPJteNGVHfKKM9k6l.

²⁷⁹ Home for Refugees USA, Facebook post, October 28, 2019, "Yesterday was another successful #catering meal by *Aeisha, who is a #refugee from #Afghanistan!"
www.facebook.com/homeforrefugeesusa/posts/pfbid035ov1LbaCmaerFGAS8hd3YwEffP6EWDvVWMqSYma46o5DKyMvHYC3cc3H6X9Z1MAQl.

²⁸⁰ Minda Schweizer, interview with Guerline Jozef.

compared to ten in Southern California at the end of 2018.²⁸¹ The increase brought along financial pressures of paying for increased staffing to coach more teams. Fundraising through the yearly gala and dinners had brought in just under \$30,000, and teams only raised funds as needed for newcomers, not the organizational costs. Minda calculated that the cost to HFR in staffing to coach a team was about \$5000 for a year, with new referrals coming in monthly. Elena continued work with the Family Reunification Project and Southern California Home Teams, eventually finding a personal work life balance. She worked to revise the Welcome packet for Home Teams while a new staff member focused on grants and began forming a planning team for the fall gala in hopes of increasing funding through the event. Bi-weekly staff meetings were held at Minda's house.

2020

The Setting

In 2020, the Trump administration continued its policy of implementing restrictions on the US immigration system by lowering the refugee ceiling to 11,814, the lowest number of refugees admitted since 1975.²⁸² Since 2017, resettlement agencies had closed or zeroed out 134 sites, reducing their capacity by 38%.²⁸³ From 2016 to 2020, the number of refugees admitted to the United States had dropped by 86 percent.²⁸⁴ Over the four years of the Trump Administration,

²⁸¹ Home for Refugees, "Homecomings and Updates, December, 2019," mailchi.mp/5466e0603290/home-for-refugees-sep-2018-homecomings-and-updates-3957674?fbclid=IwAR2SQvU3Wwy9aFLHfentXtDI6cTRvEYk07Lk-jWBcHjELb_jY8DJU2sAe2w.

²⁸² "U.S. Annual Refugee Resettlement Ceilings and Number of Refugees Admitted, 1980-Present," Migration Policy Institute, Accessed September 14, 2021, www.migrationpolicy.org/programs/data-hub/charts/us-annual-refugee-resettlement-ceilings-and-number-refugees-admitted-united.

²⁸³ Silva Mathema and Sofia Carratala, "Rebuilding the U.S. Refugee Program for the 21st Century," Center for American Progress, 2020, Accessed April 8, 2022, www.americanprogress.org/article/rebuilding-u-s-refugee-program-21st-century/, 11.

²⁸⁴ Mathema and Carratala, "Rebuilding the U.S. Refugee Program," 1.

472 administrative changes to dismantle and reconstruct elements of the US immigration system were enacted.²⁸⁵

On January 3, 2020, China informed WHO that they had identified over forty cases of an unknown pneumonia. On February 11, WHO announced the name of the virus that had by now killed over 1,000 people worldwide, COVID-19. On March 11, WHO declared COVID-19 a pandemic, and on March 13, the Trump Administration declared a nationwide emergency and closed the borders. States began to implement shutdowns on March 15.²⁸⁶

Family Reunification

In January, a second group of parents, six fathers, were brought into the US through the Family Reunification Project. Four had family already in the US, and two had sponsors in Chicago and on the East coast. Elena began calling each of the fathers, HFR and Al Otro Lado met weekly to work through legal and financial issues. The end of June was the proposed end date of the twenty-nine families, and the six had an approximate end date in the fall. Master Court hearings for their asylum cases were in place.²⁸⁷

COVID-19

On March 18, 2020, California went into lockdown. Court hearings were canceled. For those without court dates, no dates would be assigned.²⁸⁸ Over the following weeks HFR

²⁸⁵ Jessica Bolter, Emma Israel, and Sarah Pierce, “Four Years of Profound Change: Immigration Policy During the Trump Presidency,” Migration Policy Institute, February 2022. Accessed April 5, 2023. www.migrationpolicy.org/sites/default/files/publications/mpi-trump-at-4-report-final.pdf.

²⁸⁶ Center for Disease Control and Prevention, CDC Museum COVID-19 Timeline, Accessed February 22, 2023. www.cdc.gov/museum/timeline/covid19.html#Early-2020.

²⁸⁷ Personal Communication, January 22, 2022.

²⁸⁸ Personal Communication, March 19, 2022.

prioritized talking to former and current families about quarantine and social distancing.²⁸⁹ They began a fundraising campaign to raise \$4200 in order to fund the additional staffing cost of a video assessment with each family to ascertain how they were coping with the COVID -19 lockdown. In a Facebook post, HFR described the need for the assessments,

In any disaster, those on the margins are the first to experience the full impact, and this is already proving true with the spread of COVID-19. Most severely destabilized are the poor, which for our nonprofit, is our program's #refugee families.

Recently we did a fundraising campaign to raise funds needed to do initial assessments for all our former and current families. We raised the money we needed.²⁹⁰

Staff and Home Team volunteers met on Zoom with past and present families and asked about the impact of the lockdown on their work, their ability to pay monthly bills, food, and what food staples would be helpful for donations. They asked about their children's ability to connect online for school and if they know how to turn in their homework.

A Guatemalan family of four who had been resettled as refugees through IRC and HFR shared their difficulties during their call. Oscar had been furloughed from his job in a hotel laundry service, and Evelyn's childcare hours were reduced. HFR had begun to partner with the University of California at Irvine's School of Nursing Masters students to help families access their health providers by telehealth. The student who partnered with Oscar was bilingual and assisted him in filling out his unemployment application in Spanish. The Home Team's church covered one month of their rent, and the team dropped off groceries to help offset expenses. Eventually, through connections with his Home Team, Oscar found a new position working in a warehouse doing fulfillment and learning how to operate a forklift. Funds from HFR's Family

²⁸⁹ Home for Refugees USA, Twitter, "During the #COVID19 emergency, we are spending time talking with each of our families to make sure they understand the quarantine, social distancing, and washing hands with soap," March 30, 2020, twitter.com/HFR_USA.

²⁹⁰ Home for Refugees USA, Facebook, May 5, 2020, www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=966740933762158&set=pb.100068143634386.-2207520000.

Relief Fund covered Oscar and Evelyn's August and September utility bills when they were short on funds.²⁹¹

Home Team #21

George was at a holiday party in December of 2018 when he met a young man from Africa who had just been released from a detention center to his hosts through the work of the Haitian Bridge Alliance. George, a black American, had listened to the young man's story and asked if it would help his application if people from the community came out in support. George had begun volunteering by visiting people in detention centers.

And I started helping out by going to the detention center visiting the people there in detention, as they awaited that release to proceed with their seeking asylum. After seeing the people there in the detention center, understanding that process, then I started picking them up from the detention center, taking them to their host places, San Diego, El Centro, and out in Blythe here in Southern California. That led to me being the one that would go to downtown Los Angeles and post the bonds so that these young people could be released from the detention centers.²⁹²

In 2019, George met another young man at a banquet for HFR and other community organizations. A staff member from the Haitian Bridge Alliance introduced George to David, who had just been released from detention and was to go to his asylum hearing the next day. George asked if it would be helpful if he came along.

His attorney... took him out there to San Diego, and I brought him back. So, what happened is I went to do some other things. He went to take care of his paperwork. His attorney had to leave, and because he is an asylum seeker, and not from the local area, the staff there (couldn't help him), but...they don't have time to explain things.

So, when I got back over to where he was, he was standing there with his paperwork saying, "They won't help..." So, when they saw me standing there in a suit talking to him, they assumed I was an attorney. They rushed right over there real quick, a supervisor and another young lady rushed right over to where we were and started

²⁹¹ Home for Refugees USA, Facebook post, September 22, 2020, "We want to share with you about one of our families, Oscar and Evelyn, and how they were affected by the #COVID19 quarantine, www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=1075441116225472&set=pb.100068143634386.-2207520000.

²⁹² George, interview with author, January 9, 2023.

explaining to me what was going on and why they couldn't help him. He was at the wrong place. He had to report to Los Angeles, not to San Diego, because of where he lived. So that's why they were saying they couldn't help him.

But when they saw me, they came and explained it.

And when we were walking away, he looked at me, he said, "Can you come with me to all my hearings?" He'd never seen that before. And so that's why he was wondering if I could come with him to all this here. So, from there, I started working with him as more like a mentor.

Haitian Bridge Alliance contacted HFR about forming a Home Team for David and asked George to be a part of the team. Minda guided the team online in working through the care plan and finding ways to connect virtually. They built community through "words of encouragement, funny videos, and hilarious gif texts over zoom or WhatsApp." David is a Christian and liked to pray at the end of their monthly group meetings. His prayers encouraged the team members while weekly deliveries of food and supplies from "Mum" Sharon to David's home brought smiles to his apartment mates.²⁹³

When the team needed money for medical and dental needs, they applied and received money from the fund that had been raised by HFR.²⁹⁴ The team helped David enroll in training for a project management certificate. He found volunteer work providing elder care and helping with food distribution at a local church while waiting for his work permit. At their end of the team year, they met for a celebration.

We all went around and gave words of encouragement and hope for his future. David thanked his team for being able to spend time together this past year, in person in the beginning and then over Zoom.

He said he benefited from just watching how Americans interact. He also loved the food they dropped off for him throughout the year. He said they were like a mother who cares for her child by feeding him ... especially when he is separated from his mother back in Cameroon.

²⁹³ Home for Refugees, "Creating Home: February 2021," mailchi.mp/9c21b1f0a632/home-for-refugees-creating-home-feb-2021?e=0982233a0d&fbclid=IwAR28ky3eyTU_JX-NIEQh_bEh9Q4JrqTmiWCu7VYltOcXiUEBdfcHuh70JtU

²⁹⁴ George.

He also learned a lot this year how to live independently by his team saying, “It’s time to do your taxes.” Also teaching him as a single young man how to pre-plan meals and grocery shop, and how to keep a budget.

Everyone agreed it was not an end but just the beginning of a life-long friendship.²⁹⁵

Fundraising and Growth

HFR’s third annual fundraising gala was held online in the fall. A gala planning team with HFR staff and volunteers had begun meeting in February, and as it became clear that it would need to move online, they found ways to have a multi-sensory cultural experience. Minda’s daughter, an art student, had painted a portrait of a father from Honduras and his daughter who had been reunited through the Family Reunification Project. In HFR’s December newsletter, Minda shared words from her daughter,

“My foundation is in God, not even debt, or the separation with my daughter will destroy me. I cry in my heart, but cry praying to God.” ~A

While Alberto was in detention, he saw discouragement among his fellow detainees. As a Christian, he decided to create a Christian Bible study with the other detainees to keep up their hope and strength by turning to their faith. Then after 45 days, he was released to start his legal process of seeking asylum. Upon his release, he was reunited with his daughter.

I had the opportunity to create a painting inspired by Alberto’s story for the 3rd Annual Home for Refugees' Gala. I was particularly moved by Alberto’s faith as his source of strength and how he then used his strength to be an encouragement to others. I wanted to reflect that in my painting, so after painting him and his daughter I picked a verse from the Bible that came to my mind as I reflected on his story. I selected Philippians 3:20 which reads, “But our citizenship is in heaven, ...” Though governments and authorities fail us, God never will. I will always remember Alberto's perseverance through hardship.

The portrait was sent to A and his daughter with names of HFR staff, volunteers, and supporters on the back.

²⁹⁵ Home for Refugees USA, Facebook post. March 22, 2021, “This Sunday afternoon we celebrated with a picnic one of our **#CommunitySponsorship** team’s end to coming alongside David for one year who is an **#asylee**.” www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=1204432006659715&set=pb.100068143634386.-2207520000.

At the end of 2020, HFR celebrated their fiftieth Home Team. For the second year in a row, they had summer interns. Lynne had become a Home Team coach and others had joined as staff.

2021

The Setting

In February of 2021, newly-elected President Biden made an Executive Order to rebuild the refugee resettlement program. He committed to increase the resettlement ceiling in the new fiscal year, beginning on October 1, 2021, to 125,000. Included in the Executive Order was a charge to “enhance the capacity of the USRAP to welcome refugees by expanding the use of community sponsorship and co-sponsorship models by refugee resettlement agencies, and by entering into new public-private partnerships.”²⁹⁶ Work began on developing community sponsorship through an MOU between the State Department and the Rockefeller philanthropy group to pilot a private resettlement project.²⁹⁷

Grants and Partnerships

In January of 2021, Minda and fifteen other nonprofit leaders were chosen to participate in the Hello Neighbor Network’s intensive 10-month leadership program.²⁹⁸ Hello Neighbor, a Pittsburgh-based nonprofit working to improve the lives of newcomers, began the Hello Neighbor Network in 2019 with leaders from nine small nonprofits from across the US. A

²⁹⁶ Executive Office of the President, *Executive Order 14013 of February 04, 2021, Rebuilding and Enhancing Programs to Resettle Refugees and Planning for the Impact of Climate Change on Migration*. Federal Register, 2021, Accessed April 11, 2022,

²⁹⁷ Austin, interview with author, Zoom, March 3, 2022.

²⁹⁸ Home for Refugees USA, Twitter, January 12, 2021.

\$300,000 grant from the Walmart Foundation in December 2020 enabled them to expand their national network and launch the leadership program.²⁹⁹ In June HFR received a capacity building grant through the network to continue program expansion.³⁰⁰

In March 2021, HFR was one of eleven organizations to receive a grant of \$100,000 over two years to enhance its community sponsorship program through the Catalyst fund.³⁰¹

Established in 2019, the fund's goal is to help organizations develop, implement, and enhance their community sponsorship programs.³⁰²

HFR and the Interfaith Refugee and Immigrant Services (IRIS), the resettlement agency of the Episcopal Diocese of Los Angeles, partnered through the grant to find ways to better work together. IRIS was one of three LA resettlement agencies remaining in LA; six had closed since 2017.³⁰³ In partnerships that IRIS had in the past, differing goals had often led to an increase in IRIS' workload. With HFR, the posture was one of flexibility to serve the goals of the resettlement agency.³⁰⁴ HFR would take on all communication with the Home Teams working with those resettled through IRIS, eventually putting into place a volunteer reporting form for teams to report on the number of hours they volunteered and any mileage and donations collected. HFR would provide that information to IRIS, which they needed for reporting and

²⁹⁹ Hello Neighbor Network, *History*, www.neighbornetwork.io/history, Accessed February 20, 2023.

³⁰⁰ Home for Refugees USA, Facebook, June 24, 2021, "We are thrilled to announce that Home for Refugees USA has received a Capacity Building Grant through our membership in the @helloneighborhq!"

³⁰¹ U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants, "Private Funders Unite to Support Community Sponsorship of Refugees in the United States," March 4, 2021, Accessed February 20, 2023 refugees.org/private-funders-unite-to-support-community-sponsorship-of-refugees-in-the-united-states/.

³⁰² Community Sponsorship Hub, "The Community Sponsorship Catalyst Fund," Accessed February 23, 2023, communitysponsorshiphub.org/catalyst-fund/.

³⁰³ Pat McCaughan, Episcopal Diocese of Los Angeles, "Meghan Taylor leaves IRIS 'family' for new adventures, ministries," April 27, 2022, Accessed February 23, 2023, diocesela.org/news/meghan-taylor-leaves-iris/.

³⁰⁴ Minda.

grants. Minda continued with her practice of adding changes and adjustments to how HFR and Home Teams functioned, as long as they stayed within her vision of a welcoming team for newcomers. The changes would prepare HFR to better work with resettlement agencies across the country.

Beginning in the spring of 2021, HFR partnered with the University of California, Irvine School of Nursing. UCI undergrad nursing students were paired and connected with twenty-four of the Family Reunification Project families to address medical concerns and connect them with free or low-income resources in their communities.³⁰⁵ Elena and an HFR intern joined a nursing professor weekly in guiding the students through the partnership. The partnership has continued, allowing HFR to “deliver culturally affirming case management and trauma informed care...and building the skillsets of nursing students to work with a refugee and immigrant population.”³⁰⁶

World Refugee Day

As a member of the Los Angeles Refugee Forum, HFR chaired the planning committee for Los Angeles’ World Refugee Day in 2021, with the theme, “Breaking Bread.” The goal was to share resources and information that would be helpful for refugees starting a business. Speakers gave information on steps in starting a small business and consumer lending and credit-building. A couple who had come to the US from Guatemala as refugees and were now chefs demonstrated how to make a traditional dish from Guatemala. Those who registered ahead received the recipe and ingredient list and cooked at home. Two resources guides were made

³⁰⁵ “UCI Sue & Bill Gross School of Nursing,” Home for Refugees, www.homeforrefugeesusa.org/new-page, Accessed April 5, 2023.

³⁰⁶ “UCI Sue & Bill Gross School of Nursing.”

available—Starting your Own Business and a guide to international restaurants in the Greater LA area.

Jean wrote about the evening afterwards,

The cooking demo was fun—it allowed my husband and me to try a recipe we otherwise wouldn't have tried, and the end result was delicious. I confess that we tweaked the recipe a bit to suit our tastes, but I think we captured the essence of the guarachas.

For me as a Home Team Coach, the information shared during the second half about aids and tools for refugees interested in starting their own businesses was invaluable. I can think of so many refugee families I've encountered that would love to have this information. Often our families start with entry level jobs as they first try to build their lives in this country, but dream of more independence and a more fulfilling way of earning a living.

These tools could absolutely help them make this dream come true. I have already shared the presentations and resource guides with a refugee family that I hope will take advantage of the opportunities afforded by the participating organizations to build a more flourishing life.³⁰⁷

Operation Allies

After the September 11, 2001, attacks on US soil, the US had invaded Afghanistan to aid in the overthrow of the Taliban. Though Osama bin Laden was killed in 2011 by US forces, troops remained to provide training and support to the Afghan military. In 2018, the US had met with Taliban representatives to discuss working towards a peaceful end to the ongoing US involvement in Afghanistan. The US-Taliban deal was signed on February 29, 2020, by the US and the Taliban. The agreement stipulated the full withdrawal of US forces over 14 months as the Taliban took part in peace negotiations with the Afghan government. In the aftermath of the agreement, there was a surge in attacks and thousands of civilians were killed. Kabul fell on

³⁰⁷ HFR newsletter, "Creating Home: July 21, 2021," mailchi.mp/4c00f5776dd7/home-for-refugees-usa-newsletter-july-2021?e=0982233a0d&fbclid=IwAR2RxbvcwEMmyce1xM0-HDUUpANgdUzjTgDCxm4muJ43aD_RDI_1Y41iB64.

August 15, 2021, and in the last few weeks before the deadline at the end of August for US withdrawal, the US evacuated refugees.³⁰⁸

One newcomer who would arrive in the US with his family told a member of his Home Team about their departure from Afghanistan.

There were the hordes that got down to the airport and he couldn't get on the plane the first time and had to go home and wait for the government to say this bus is coming...you can't tell anybody else.

He really shared about what it was like when they came and being on the army base and how awful it was. As far as you know, here, you had people from all over Afghanistan, that all spoke different languages. That here was the assumption they all spoke the same language. Dump them in by themselves so their only privacy was sheets around their bed. And how it really is demoralizing. And that if it wasn't that his sister was in California, and he could say I really need to get out of here, I really do have a place to go that he has no idea how long they would have been there.

I mean, he shared those stories with us. And when we had a picnic with them...during this first year. He shared with everybody... what it had been like, which was good.³⁰⁹

By the end of 2021, 74,000 Afghans would be welcomed to the US. More than 40 percent came as Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) holders, granting immediate permanent residence in the US, because they had aided US government and NATO missions.³¹⁰ Some were in the process of applying for SIV or came in under humanitarian parole, allowed to temporarily stay while applying through the asylum system. Others were family members of US citizens and lawful permanent residents or had worked in journalism, human rights activism, development, or in the former Afghan government.³¹¹

³⁰⁸ Adam Zeidan, *Withdrawal of United States Troops from Afghanistan*, Britannica, Accessed March 11, 2023, www.britannica.com/event/withdrawal-of-United-States-troops-from-Afghanistan.

³⁰⁹ Janet, interview with author, Zoom, January 17, 2023.

³¹⁰ James McBride, Council on Foreign Relations, "Afghanistan, Iraq, Vietnam: How the U.S. Has Resettled Its Wartime Allies," September 28, 2021, Accessed February 23, 2023. www.cfr.org/in-brief/afghanistan-iraq-vietnam-how-us-has-resettled-its-wartime-allies.

³¹¹ Office of the Spokesperson, U.S. Department of State, "Afghanistan Relocation and Resettlement Update," Accessed February 23, 2023, www.state.gov/afghanistan-relocation-and-resettlement-update/.

HFR had held online informational sessions on community sponsorship at the beginning of the year. They now adapted the sessions and announced three online informational sessions during the last week of August and then again at the beginning of September. Interest was so high that they began a waitlist before having another info session.

Jean spoke about the effect of media exposure on the explosion of interest,

Before the Afghan crisis of 2021, we were out there talking to churches...would you like to be a part of...Jewish organizations, whatever. And it was like, "Yeah, no, that may be a good thing to do, but....," and then this crisis happened, and all of a sudden, we had all these groups. So, we could publicize ourselves until we're blue in the face but until it becomes relevant to somebody, reaction will be sporadic.³¹²

Twenty-two new Home Teams were trained in the months following the fall of Kabul.

Funding

In previous years, Home Teams had raised money for families as needs arose while private donations and the yearly gala paid the operational costs of HFR, primarily salaries. In 2021 HFR added a fundraising requirement for Home Teams of \$5000.³¹³ A training session of fundraising was added to the onboarding process, and the funds were sent to HFR and put in an account designated for the needs of that newcomer family.

Now with 22 new teams, HFR needed to find a sustainable way to fund staffing. Minda looked at other models across the US and discovered that some had the teams raise \$10,000, apart from needs for newcomers. In the fall, HFR added \$5000 for a coaching fee to the amount Teams had to raise to support operational costs.³¹⁴ The \$10,000 in fundraising caused friction for

³¹² Jean

³¹³ Minda.

³¹⁴ Minda.

some teams since the change came in the process of onboarding, “It worked out fine but it did cause some anxiety.”³¹⁵

Sponsor Circles

With the fall of Kabul and the rapid evacuation of Afghans onto military bases, resettlement agencies were overworked and overwhelmed.³¹⁶ In October of 2021, the US State Department and the Community Sponsorship Hub (CSH) launched the Sponsor Circle Program for Afghans. The CSH, a sponsored project of the Rockefeller Foundation, was established in 2021 to “grow the role of communities in the protection, resettlement, and integration of refugees and other forcibly displaced people.”³¹⁷

A Circle required a group of five to raise \$2275 per individual that they would welcome. After filling out a welcome plan and application and showing they had raised 60% of the required amount, CSH vetted, certified circles, and matched them with arriving Afghans who chose to participate in the program.³¹⁸ Some were individuals who would opt into the program with one or two others and some were families. Some matches were based on proximity to ties they had already in the US.³¹⁹ Once matched, the relocating family flew directly from the base into the community where the Circle supported the newcomers in their first three months of resettlement. The Circles had an umbrella organization to coach them through their ninety days.

³¹⁵ HFR Home Team Survey.

³¹⁶ Austin, interview with author, Zoom, March 3, 2022.

³¹⁷ "About," Community Sponsorship Hub, Accessed October 7, 2022, communitysponsorshiphub.org/about/.

³¹⁸ U.S. Department of State, “Launch of the Sponsor Circle Program for Afghans,” 2021, Accessed October 7, 2022, www.state.gov/launch-of-the-sponsor-circle-program-for-afghans/.

³¹⁹ Maddie, interview with author, Zoom, January 3, 2022.

HFR was the first umbrella organization to work with Sponsor Circles.³²⁰ Unlike Home Teams, these Sponsor Circles handled their own finances for families and paid no money to HFR for organizational costs.

Austin

Austin, from Washington State, had worked with at-risk indigenous youth and at a school for survivors of human trafficking while attending a bible college in Australia. He and his wife moved to Southern California when they finished school.

I always felt like God's mission is so much bigger than the four walls of the church, in terms of wholeness, restoration, fullness, bringing things back to as it should be.

I knew I wanted to work with forcibly displaced individuals. My wife is Mexican, there's a family history there with that...I always knew I wanted to be near the border. So, with that comes asylum seekers and refugees automatically. So, one day I was at church...where I met Elena... and we just started talking, we happened to be like the only three Spanish speakers.³²¹

Elena told Austin that HFR was hiring, and he began work at the beginning of November, quickly becoming Program Coordinator of HFR's Sponsor Circle Program. He learned as he adapted, from the government acronyms and functioning to the details of what the families were eligible for based on their entry status.

Since HFR had the infrastructure in place for sponsorship, initially CSH assigned all Sponsor Circles who didn't specify a certain agency to HFR. They had to cap early on as they didn't have a funding model in place to sustain the cost of coaching this number of teams, and there was no program funding through Sponsor Circles.³²²

³²⁰ Austin.

³²¹ Austin.

³²² Austin.

HFR condensed the one-year Home Team program into a three-month program of resettlement tasks and responsibilities laid out by the US government in their MOU with the Community Sponsorship Hub. “Our touch points, our...intentional coaching, none of that changed.

We’ve seen it as a God thing because prior to you know Sponsor Circles...you could only co-sponsor within a certain radius of the resettlement agency. And so, this allows any everyday ordinary American who might not live within the radius of a resettlement agency to get involved in the resettlement efforts. Anyone and everyone.

I have a sponsor circle in remote Colorado, who finally was paired, and the family's loving being in this ski village. I have a sponsor circle in Billings, Montana. Billings is a big city, but they don't have a resettlement agency there. And so, this community of 30 plus individuals have been able to get involved.³²³

By the time the Sponsor Circle Program for Afghans ended, 60 Sponsor Circles had been coached by HFR in sponsoring 250 Afghan individuals.

2022

The Setting

In September of 2021, The US State Department had announced its partnership with Welcome.US, a non-profit, non-partisan initiative of Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors. Initially focused on catalyzing support for arriving Afghans, Welcome.US operates on the “evidence that direct participation with newcomers transforms both the welcomers and those being welcomed.”³²⁴

³²³ Austin.

³²⁴ Welcome.us, “Who We Are,” Accessed February 23, 2023, welcome.us/about#.

The Welcome Fund received donations and supported organizations through grants, and by April of 2022, it had donated \$14 million to 172 organizations, including HFR.³²⁵ The grant would fund HFR's continued involvement in Sponsor Circles, funding the Sponsor Circle Program Coordinator and one other Sponsor Circle coach.³²⁶

The United States had welcomed over 74,000 Afghans through Operation Allies Welcome, the largest evacuation since the Vietnam War.³²⁷ In a CBS News/YouGov poll, 81 percent of Americans said the US should help Afghan allies come to the US, with Republican and Democratic governors from 37 states issue statements of support.³²⁸

On February 24, Russia launched an invasion of Ukraine. By June, nearly 15 million people in Ukraine had fled their homes. Six million crossed the border to neighboring countries in Europe, making it Europe's biggest refugee crisis since World War II.³²⁹

Hiring

Coaches were brought on as part-time, Home Team (HT) Coach One, full-time, HT Coach Two, or as a HT Coach Three with supervisory responsibilities over other coaches. They accompanied teams through the onboarding process and then met with them regularly to work

³²⁵ Press Release, Welcome.US and Home for Refugees, "Welcome Fund Announces \$5.6 Million in funding for 143 Organizations Helping Welcome Afghan Allies," Accessed February 23, 2023. www.homeforrefugeesusa.org/press-center/2022/4/30/welcome-fund-announces-56-million-in-funding-for-143-organizations-helping-welcome-afghan-allies.

³²⁶ Austin.

³²⁷ James McBride, "Afghanistan, Iraq, Vietnam: How the U.S. Has Resettled Its Wartime Allies," Council on Foreign Relations, September 28, 2021, Accessed February 23, 2023. www.cfr.org/in-brief/afghanistan-iraq-vietnam-how-us-has-resettled-its-wartime-allies.

³²⁸ CBS News Poll—August 18-20, 2021, Accessed February 23, 2023. drive.google.com/file/d/1VJKdBglH8nPNslg4duYhtV1fuTcoWF4w/view.

³²⁹ UNHCR "Ukraine-Fastest Growing Refugee Crisis in Europe Since WWII," June 6, 2022, Accessed February 23, 2023, www.unhcr.org/hk/en/73141-ukraine-fastest-growing-refugee-crisis-in-europe-since-wwiihtml.
wwii/#:~:text=As%20the%20war%20in%20Ukraine,the%20border%20into%20neighboring%20Poland.

through the care plan, help problem-solve, and provide resources. In 2022, HFR had 165 volunteers participate in co-sponsorship and asylum teams and 365 in Sponsors Circles.

Up until 2022, each coach had met individually with Minda for supervision in addition to bi-weekly meetings with the staff team. Now, with a rapid increase in teams and the capacity to fund expansion through grants and the new fundraising system, HFR hired several new staff in March to coach more teams.

Maddie

Maddie, one of the new staff, grew up hearing stories from visiting missionaries and always felt like she was supposed to help people. When she was eighteen, she moved to Tijuana, Mexico, to work with a Christian organization.

And I worked with...mostly with displaced people here in Mexico...whether that's because of the drug cartels... or just violence and things like that, they're just mostly from southern Mexico. They come to Tijuana and the border to look for a better job...And then also, it's the biggest city port that people are deported to.³³⁰

Later, Maddie worked for a church missions department through their mobile shower ministry. The church was located on the edge of downtown Tijuana, connected to the border, the area where the homeless, mostly deported people, live. The church gutted a trailer and remodeled it to have three full bathrooms with hot and cold water for a mobile shower ministry. In addition to providing a shower, clothes, and food, doctors and nurses would do medical consultations. The church worked with Central Americans during the first and second caravan.

Maddie would clean the bathrooms at night.

I was able to meet an asylum seeker from Russia who was one of the first Russians that we realized had come to the border. And that was right before the invasion from Russia into Ukraine, which is really interesting. And then I lived five minutes, six minutes away driving from where the Ukrainian camp was. And so, it was just a really interesting

³³⁰ Maddie.

perspective, right when the Ukrainians, ended up here on the border before the Uniting for Ukraine program opened up. It was right when I first started working for HFR.³³¹

Maddie coached Sponsor Circles across the US, at times ten to fifteen groups at a time.

Coaching Circles to look to their communities, a core belief of HFR, was a priority,

We would always take time to remind them... connect them with community resources. Like, we're still looking for housing, like they were staying in guest housing or something like that. It was a reminder like, "Oh, do you have any friends who are landlords... Do you have any way to talk to private landlords who own their property instead of... an apartment complex or something like that?"

And then just like reminding them that also, like, that's not necessarily the core belief of the Sponsor Circles program, but as an umbrella organization, we're able to have that liberty... "Yeah, you guys, just trust us. Your community has what they need. You guys are the experts in your community."

A couple in one of her Sponsor Circles opened a nonprofit to make it easier for refugees to resettle in their city after sponsoring three men from Afghanistan. It was the first time in over 30 years that refugees were resettled in their small town. "But they were that perfect example of saying, hey, we want to do this. We know that our community has the bandwidth to do this, and the desire."³³²

Ari

My parents were not refugees. They were economic immigrants. But the whole idea of coming to a new place, new language, new culture, not knowing anybody... it's hard to make friends from the majority culture.

My dad came in the 80s and went back to India and got married in the early 90s. Then they both came here... I was born here. I have vague memories of my dad dropping my mom off to work as a certified nurse assistant. And now that I'm older I can comprehend, "Oh, that was actually a big deal. You know, getting her first job in a new place."

And she was in her 20s. ...so a 20 plus year-old woman, in a new country, new language, having a kid... not having any friends here. So, Home for Refugees helped me kind of understand my story more, but also helps me to understand my neighbors more.³³³

³³¹ Maddie.

³³² Maddie.

³³³ Ari, interview with author, Zoom, January 19, 2023.

After getting a degree in political science, Ari worked for a time as a hospital chaplain and at a homeless shelter. He had started seminary and was a job coach for people with disabilities when his former college pastor, who was working at HFR, emailed him about being a Home Team coach,

So, my heart was kind of already getting ready to kind of look at our society from all these different angles, like from a marginalized perspective, or just, if you're in the hospital, obviously, you're not feeling well. So just all these different ways of looking at life and coming alongside people with different struggles. Hearing how they communicate, why they believe what they believe. So that kind of...in my mind and my heart. I've had that desire to kind of grow more in that area.³³⁴

While another coach was finishing his master's program, Ari took over with a team during their last months. He helped with a couple check-in meetings and worked on the end of the year presentation, where a Home Team, the family, and coach come together to celebrate the end of the team year.

Our teams are encouraged to take as many photos and videos as possible. One is also just for memories. But also, I guess, in a practical sense, there's something beautiful about getting together with a team and the family at the end of the year and reflecting on how far we've come in the year. Especially... and all the photos are dated. When we get the photos, we have to date them on our files.

So, when we make the (PowerPoint) presentation, the very first word that comes up is the very first photo that was taken. And it goes in order from the timeline. So, when the family and the team at the end of the year see the presentation, the first photo they see is the very first photo. It could have been their arrival. It could have been when the family and the teammates were there for the first time.

So, all these memories come back. And there's also other memories that the family might have forgotten.

Minda said in the beginning...we used to do a soundtrack. But they realized that as the presentation was going, people wanted to talk about some of the photos.³³⁵

³³⁴ Ari.

³³⁵ Ari.

Ari met weekly with his supervisor online. They worked through planning the team year, the hurdles that come up as the year goes by, the team dynamics with working with volunteers with different backgrounds, and each refugee family working through their own struggles.”³³⁶

Ari says that it’s one thing to be a coach on paper and accomplish the tasks, work through the care plan, and make the best of challenging situations, but the emotional aspect of working with people who have an uncertain future is a balancing act for him,

I'm at home, I get to sleep well, I have a job. We all have a secure future, even the team, but you're with someone whose future is uncertain and how do you balance that kind of temptation to just keep on going with my life or our lives? ...you balance it...you just keep on going, but it feels really weird. Yeah, the job aspect is good. But the emotional side that's...it's hard.³³⁷

Alixia

Currently, I'm at Fuller Seminary, getting my master's in justice and advocacy. And I've always been involved in some way. And coming alongside the marginalized, coming alongside...that's just my calling, like to give voice to those who are oppressed, who don't have the strength to use their voice right now.³³⁸

Alixia was six weeks old when her parents migrated from the Philippines to Southern California. They found a church with many Chinese people originally from China’s Fujian province, where Alixia’s family were originally from. The church was founded in the 50s, when many Chinese were coming and there were no churches for them.

In 2016 the church partnered with churches and nonprofits to serve with refugees in Europe. From then on, they went to Europe every summer. Alixia went to Berlin in 2018 and 2019.

³³⁶ Ari.

³³⁷ Ari.

³³⁸ Alixia, interview with author, Zoom, December 30, 2022.

I would say God's been highlighting refugees to me since then, since 2018, when the pandemic came in 2020... because of the lockdown, we just hosted English classes virtually. We figured out the time difference then we were able to host English classes. Actually, we had more people attend the online classes than in person in Berlin. And then Kabul happened and then...that's where God was directing me.

After the fall of Kabul, many Afghans were temporarily resettled near her church.

We don't talk about immigration just because it's too political, pastors, older generation thinking. But no, it was just...like-minded people who just saw what was happening. It didn't come from the top. It came from, like the missions pastor, and he's not the senior pastor...

So, it was just like a niche of people who saw what was happening and wanted to do something about it. And we felt like God was calling us to do so. And so that's how we decided to help our, our ref... or they're our friends now. Our friends. And also, because they're literally down the street. They were like five minutes away from our church.

They formed a team to see how they could help and invited HFR to do a training. Alixia talked with Minda after the presentation, hoping for a job opportunity but there wasn't at the time, and the church decided not to go with HFR. "They decided to do their own thing, which I didn't really agree with because I'm a person who loves structure, and they already have the structure. And I know that people on the team and they just need structure to work better."³³⁹

A month later, a friend reached out to let her know that HFR was hiring, but Alixia felt she was too involved with her church at the time to pursue it. "I was just so busy with resettling the refugees around our church that I just didn't have the time or the capacity." However, when Minda reached out personally, Alixia said yes.

Her first team came together when a friend from a church reached out because a team was interested in resettling refugees and wanted to hear more about HFR. Alixia did an online info session, and addressed the pros and cons of partnering with HFR versus doing it on their own, "And I gave my unbiased opinions, but also my personal experience, because I shared my

³³⁹ Alixia.

personal experience of what it was like to try to resettle without structure without a partnership. It's like you're trying to build a ship as you go.”

This Home Team came together and was matched quickly. They wanted to do their six hours of training sessions in one day rather than spread out over four weeks, their church gave the \$10,000, and they found housing through a friend of a team member who wanted to rent his house to refugees.

Eric

Eric had been an English major in college and had worked in multiple jobs over his career: an English teacher in Japan, a university professor, a youth pastor, screenwriter, and starting a coffee roasting business. Before COVID, he had applied and been accepted for a university teaching position in Ukraine through the Peace Corps. He waited as his start date was pushed back several times. When the war in Ukraine broke out, he knew he wouldn't be going. One evening, he was having dinner with the friend he had done the coffee business with and the friend's wife, who was on the board of HFR.

And I was trying to figure it out, but I just haven't found anything that I'm really that interested in or passionate about.

So, she sent me the information and Home for Refugees was hiring at the time. She sent me the job descriptions. So ...just from what I read, I was like, “Oh, I like the mission.” And, you know, part of part of my... struggle over the summer when I was trying to figure out what to do is ... I just wanted to find something that felt somewhat meaningful.³⁴⁰

Home Team #75

Sara had grown up in the US. “My dad's Ukrainian and my mom is Russian and German. They applied... for refugee status through World Relief, and they were given that status and

³⁴⁰ Eric, interview with author, Zoom, January 20, 2023.

moved to California.”³⁴¹ Sara’s church was looking into ways to directly help marginalized communities and looked into HFR. Initially, the time commitment was too much, and a team didn’t form. Sara was applying for graduate school as a nurse anesthetist and wanted a volunteer experience for her resume that was also meaningful—something she could be passionate about. So, she recruited a team from her church. They didn’t know each other well, “at best acquaintances... there were some people who had never met one another before.”

The team had four one hour-long training sessions on Zoom once a week. And then met once weekly until they met their fundraising goal of \$10,000. They made an announcement to raise funds at the beginning of their training in March and then had weekly check-ins with HFR while they raised the money. It was challenging. It was hard to find a good time for five people to meet, and the ideas they had for fundraising, like a silent auction or bake sale, were unlikely to raise enough money. After a second announcement at church in May the rest of the money came in. “And it was raised, the money was completely raised. We have a relatively small church, I would say like maybe 100 members. So, we are not quite sure how we got to that.”

The team was matched with a family from Afghanistan and met on Monday nights with their coach, going over the care plan. As a nurse, Sara was responsible for medical needs and appreciated her coach’s input,

I was trying to figure out for my family, like regarding health insurance, should I...connect them with this hospital or should I connect with this local clinic around the corner from them? And I think I was getting some, like a lot of questions and maybe some pushback from the family about this local clinic.

I was racking my brain trying to figure out other options. And then when I brought that to the coach, she said, “You know, I would suggest this clinic,” and kind of just validated...the doctor was speaking the same language as the family. You know, they accepted their insurance, and they were able to do vaccines. So, it was very clear.

³⁴¹ Sara, interview with author, Zoom, December 9, 2022.

Again, for her not to kind of get lost in all of their questioning either. Because, you know, although I'm a nurse, I definitely am not well versed in insurance. So, I had as many questions as the family did. I'm not the leader.³⁴²

The team advocated for the family for school enrollment. A middle school was close to the family's address but because of district lines, they were assigned to a school two bus rides away. Team members went to the closer school and met with the principal who agreed the children could attend that school.

Sara's involvement in finding medical care led to frustration at the system. She found a low-cost healthcare plan and helped the family sign up, but after 60 days their status changed automatically, and they no longer had access to the low-cost plan.

So how is this hospital system ever planning on accepting Medicaid patients? Does it have to be within the 60-day period? There's just like this loophole that maybe that's their policy, so they don't have to accept low income patients...

But then, don't say that you accept Medicare patients...because that kind of got the hopes up of the family. And I set up appointments. So, it's hard to tell the family, "Yeah, this is like how it has to be, you have to wait three more weeks. We changed your insurance to this, but we have to wait till the first of the month for you to actually get that care."³⁴³

The team's coach brought perspective to the team when they were frustrated.

Because she's coaching other teams, she'll bring stories ... and I would say for the most part, she kind of keeps reiterating how lucky we are to have this family, and she's very amazed at them. So, you know, she was saying although it's so hard that this is actually considered an extremely well-adapting family under the circumstances. I think it was helpful to get almost that positive feedback from a coach perspective, that they're actually doing quite well.³⁴⁴

Sara's team had only been matched with the family for three months when I talked to her. She had this to say of the experience so far and whether she would recommend it to others,

³⁴² Sara.

³⁴³ Sara.

³⁴⁴ Sara.

I don't regret doing this. I think it's so meaningful and like, just amazing relationships and our family is extremely sweet and grateful. And that's such a bonus, it's definitely never guaranteed.

I would recommend it. But then I would also make sure that whoever's signing up for this, prepare to spend a lot of time, just have a lot of hours. And prepare for your heart to be broken, to be mad at the system, but also at the family. And then like, you're like, "I can't be mad at the family because they're in the worst time of their entire life, like, unimaginably difficult conditions."³⁴⁵

Uniting for Ukraine

In May of 2022, the Sponsor Circle Program expanded from Afghans to support Ukrainian newcomers through Uniting for Ukraine, providing a pathway for Ukrainian citizens to come to the US to stay for a two-year period of humanitarian parole.³⁴⁶ The program was updated from three months to six months.³⁴⁷ HFR found that mobilizing people to sponsor was challenging. They held online informational sessions as they had months before for Afghans, but attendance was low and few groups formed.

So, we have less sponsor support groups for Ukrainians, Well, it's so different, right? Because it depends on the national media ...the psyche of the American public, and how long they can retain information and compassion fatigue. It's just for us...we've been trying. And in the fall of Kabul online information sessions were immensely successful. With the war in Ukraine, the online info sessions have not been successful. So now we're trying to pivot to more in person gatherings. And as well, we're trying to think outside of the box.³⁴⁸

Elena noted that for asylum-seeking families and those being resettled outside of the resettlement agency system, some groups reached out to HFR asking to work with the most

³⁴⁵ Sara. It may be startling to imagine anger towards the families, but volunteers and newcomers are usually navigating a relationship over vast differences in culture and experience. Newcomers are often facing culture shock and are likely from a traumatic background. Each member of the team and family have their own expectations and history to the relationship.

³⁴⁶ US Citizenship and Immigration Services, Uniting for Ukraine, Accessed March 11, 2023. <https://www.uscis.gov/ukraine>.

³⁴⁷ Maddie.

³⁴⁸ Austin.

vulnerable, those who don't have access to resources and would need housing. "And then it always kind of matches that at the same time that we're being reached by a group, there's a family...that we know the story of." She worked with a Home Team from the Sisters of Saint Joseph parish in Orange Country that had specifically wanted to be matched with asylum-seekers, which they had done in the past without partnering with an organization. This led to a call between HFR and nationwide parishes of the Sisters of Saint Joseph,

We were part of a national call with them just from that experience, where they're looking into becoming sponsors... Ukrainians and Venezuelans that would need sponsors to come to the US.³⁴⁹

So, we're thinking, this individual has a family that can resettle them, so then they just need a fiscal sponsor, maybe this is that connection.³⁵⁰

2023

Launch of Welcome Corps

The President's Report to Congress on Proposed Refugee Admissions for Fiscal Year 2022 stated that a major initiative would be to open a path to the implementation of a private sponsorship program, allowing those with refugee status to enter through sponsorship instead of through one of the nine resettlement agencies.³⁵¹ In September of 2022 the Biden administration prepared to develop a long-term program as they teamed with organizations to launch a pilot program.³⁵² Welcome Corps was launched in January of 2022 by the US State Department,

³⁴⁹ Elena

³⁵⁰ Austin.

³⁵¹ *Report to the Congress on Proposed Refugee Admissions for Fiscal Year 2022* by the U.S. Department of State and Health and Human Services. Sept. 30, 2021.

³⁵² Julie Watson and Amy Taxin, "New Model to Enlist Regular Americans to Resettle Refugees," *AP News*, September 18, 2022. Accessed February 14, 2023. apnews.com/article/afghanistan-russia-ukraine-united-states-immigration-477d06070766db3800efd03528c845ec.

providing a private sponsorship pathway for “everyday Americans to play a leading role in welcoming refugees.”³⁵³

Jean

Jean continues to coach teams through HFR but wonders if she will continue working with newcomers after retirement.

I think it'll be interesting to see... When I'm finished coaching, and I retire, will I continue to volunteer with refugees? Or will I focus my work elsewhere? And I don't know. I feel like you had asked me, when people talk about your calling, and you talk about your vocation, or whatever it is, and, and I never, it was always hard for me to figure out what, what is, what is that thing?

And people would ask, “Well, what, what are you just really passionate about?” And my answer is always whatever I'm engaging with at that moment. Is it incarceration? Is it homelessness? But there are things that every time I engage with that my hackles go up, I get all riled up inside, and I want to do something about it.

And I don't think that I would have put refugees at the top of my list. But this came about. And so, I stepped in, and I didn't expect it to turn into a job. And it did turn into a job. And now it's pretty much all-consuming because I'm also a part time music teacher. And so piano, private, private lessons. And that's really the bandwidth that I have right now. Will that continue in two or three years when I'm done with this?³⁵⁴

Elena

Elena had overseen HFR's Asylum Program, academic partnerships, advocacy work, as well as some grants. She was now overseeing all programs: community sponsorship, Sponsor Circles, asylum, and the development of private sponsorship. She spoke of recent advocacy work through a California coalition of organizations working with immigrants, refugees, and Special Immigrant Visa holders.

And the purpose is always to come up with recommendations that we can give out to our Legislature Council...for actual law to be changed. I was part of that committee last year. Something that we were really pushing for was extended case management because as of

³⁵³US Department of State, “Fact Sheet—Launch of Welcome Corps-Private Sponsorship of Refugees,” www.state.gov/launch-of-the-welcome-corps-private-sponsorship-of-refugees-2/.

³⁵⁴ Jean.

right now, refugees arrive, and they only get those... 90 days of federally-funded assistance. And if you have been paired with a Home Team, wonderful, then you have that commitment from a volunteer group for much longer than that. But what about all the families that just kind of fall through the cracks?³⁵⁵ I think we've finally found an author... someone who will actually be our backer for that bill.

Most organizations ... are refugees resettlement organizations. We're the only ones that are not really. But we are also the ones that come in with a different knowledge than they have because resettlement agencies don't get to see the day-to-day of what refugee families' lives are like and what their experience is like.

And then how much of a difference having that year commitment, that year persistence adds to their overall resettlement. It's an exciting time where both on a federal level and on a state level, we're hoping to see some changes in terms of settlement. And I think we're just like, eager to continue welcoming refugees. Sometimes it's crazy to think that what started with Minda's vision back in 2016 is now so many people on staff and how we just continue to grow in the amount of families that we have currently and just welcome in the past.³⁵⁶

Austin

Austin continues in his role of Program Coordinator with supervisory responsibility for two staff as well as coaching teams.

And it's kind of a once in a 40-year opportunity that we have right now to cement this (community sponsorship pathways) within the US government and within the US more broadly, and we're really excited about the prospect. But it's going to be an interesting two years ... turning everyday ordinary citizens into advocates for these systems (of sponsorship) and getting the public involved more broadly... because who knows what will happen in 2024? So, I think these next two years will be critical.³⁵⁷

Austin represented HFR at the Global Community Sponsorship Gathering in Madrid, Spain.

... I find myself in these weird spaces that I never thought I would. Like, what was it a month ago now? I was in Madrid... They asked to have an HFR representation at the global gathering of community sponsorships.

We were in Seattle with PRM, Population, Refugee and Migration just a few weeks ago in December, chatting about the Sponsor Circles and sharing about our experience out of an umbrella organization with the undersecretary of PRM.

³⁵⁵ Elena.

³⁵⁶ Elena.

³⁵⁷ Austin.

And I just never, coming back from Australia, resettling here in San Diego... I never thought that I would be in these spaces, but I'm really thankful.³⁵⁸

Minda

So, you know, the US resettlement system...started during the Vietnam War. We hear stories of churches and faith groups really welcoming. So, when everything is new, people jump in. The government didn't have (it) systematized. There wasn't federal aid coming through.

After the Vietnamese... a program became more structured by the government, more professional, and then there (were) the funds. It went to the professionals... It's messy to work with the community and volunteers...and that worked up until five years ago. You can do that if there's no emergency. But when they had the emergency of Trump lowering the cap, and because they had distanced themselves from the volunteer community, they couldn't turn back to their community and ask for support because the community didn't have knowledge of the resettlement program.³⁵⁹

HFR began during a time when refugees were not arriving in the US in the same numbers as they had in previous years. These first years of volunteer teams for newcomers in Southern California were followed by an opening for sponsorship through a provision by the Biden Administration and a sudden need with the Afghan and Ukraine crisis. The organization grew from one employee to eleven from 2017 to the end of 2022 as it adapted to a changing resettlement environment and recruited, trained and coached teams of volunteers in Southern California and beyond.

³⁵⁸ Austin.

³⁵⁹ Minda.

CHAPTER FIVE: Narratives and Themes

Chapter five concludes the findings by first giving a close-up description of two Home Teams followed by an exploration of themes that emerged during the research process. Whereas chapter four focused on the chronological development of HFR as an organization, chapter five shifts to the experience of volunteers and coaches.

The two Home Teams are embedded cases within the case of HFR, chosen because of access. I pursued a closer look at Home Team 66 as there was a personal connection with the team leader and their church,³⁶⁰ so I was confident that I would be able to interview several people on the team. Five members filled out surveys, and I interviewed four. I had planned to only focus on HT 66, but three members of HT 55 filled out the online survey, and I interviewed two team members. The descriptions here may not be representative of all Home Teams, but are illustrative of challenges teams face and how HFR helps to address and work through them as well as themes that address how volunteers and HFR coaches experience the recruiting, training, and coaching process. The interplay between individuals, teams, and an organization being called, bearing the cost, and experiencing the blessing of the practice of hospitality to newcomers is more fully explored here.

³⁶⁰ My husband attended this church in high school, and we have maintained a relationship with the church through the years. They have financially supported my husband's work throughout his years of student ministry. They found out about HFR through my husband's Facebook feed.

Two Teams

Team 55

Deborah's rabbi was "always reminding us that in the Torah, how many times it talks about the stranger." She heard about sponsorship through the Orange County Jewish Coalition for Refugees and had been concerned about immigration over the last years,

During the whole Trump era, this whole antagonism from the administration towards immigration, particularly immigrants coming through the southern border, this whole wall thing, and seeing kids in cages... and the Muslim ban... we also have ... have met people that were students and were planning to come over here, and then all of a sudden, their lives were put on hold. Because of the bans. Those were mostly Muslim students from Muslim countries.

But just generally, it was just we, from being a country that at some points welcomed, but not always, immigrants. We became a country that didn't welcome them and were hostile towards them and then that bothered me.³⁶¹

Deborah felt that forming a Home Team was an opportunity to actually do something concrete. She talked to her book club and her neighbors. She sent emails. Several friends and their husbands were interested and attended the informational session, filled in their paperwork, and did background checks. During training, Deborah found the division of labor helpful as they worked through the care plan.

We went in with feelings of...but I'm not sure I could do that, or I'm good at that, I could never do that. And then once it was established that we would have our own areas that we were expected to do and that if we couldn't do them... there was the assurance that there will be backup people for each of those. If I couldn't do it, then another member said, Okay, I'll be the second for that.

So that assured us and just the idea that there was a coach, and the coach was aware of other agencies that would also help with things that we didn't know anything about. So, I think it really put us at ease...we felt good. We knew we had strengths. We knew that other people had other strengths.³⁶²

³⁶¹ Deborah, interview with author, Zoom, December 8, 2022.

³⁶² Deborah.

When she first heard about Home Teams at the Jewish Coalition meeting, the amount each Home Team had to raise towards meeting needs of the sponsored family was set at \$2500. By the time HFR was doing Afghan informational sessions, fundraising had increased to \$5000. As they were doing training and paperwork, it had moved to \$10,000, to cover the HFR's cost of coaching for the year. Janet, a member of the team recalled, "And of course, all of us hate fundraising. So that was the hardest part."³⁶³

Team dynamics were important. All of the team members knew Deborah, and everyone on the team knew one or two others. Deborah knew everyone would get along, "If there would have been someone who said they were interested, and I felt wouldn't have gotten along, if I felt they were in this for the wrong reason, I just wouldn't have had them...because of personality, because of their own maybe needs, or their own needs for control."³⁶⁴

Jean was a good fit for the team as their coach as they worked through challenges and expectations.

I think one thing that the coaching did is it put us at ease, she is a very calm person, she's a very empathetic person, she would say things like, "I understand your anxiety, don't worry about it. I've done this before, that sort of thing."

I have to tell you that our coach balances us very well, because we're all...it's a stereotype, but we're all very forceful Jewish ladies. And we say exactly what we think and, and because we're in a group, and everyone in the group is Jewish... we can be quite assertive...and expressive.

And yet she has a kind of personality where as I said, she expresses herself in a very empathetic way. So, she'll say, I understand how you feel. Let's leave that for another time. But...the fit was really very good.³⁶⁵

The family they were matched with had arrived in California in October through their own family connections and were matched in December with the Home Team, so many tasks

³⁶³ Janet, interview with author, Zoom, January 17, 2022.

³⁶⁴ Deborah.

³⁶⁵ Janet.

that the team had been prepared for during training weren't necessary, like signing up for benefits. Their first task was finding housing, and they struggled.

...making phone calls, they were on websites, and just, it was going nowhere. And we kept hearing because of COVID. And a lot of other things... there were no apartments available even at a higher rate. We sort of said, "Okay, we'll go as high as this." But then this young man found an apartment. Where he found it, he was living with his sister, and there was one that opened up.³⁶⁶

The team helped with set up and ongoing support and were able to rely on one another to meet needs as they came up.

I mean, there wasn't any area where we felt that we either didn't have the skills or didn't have the ability to find what we needed to. And also, location-wise, one of the group lives within 15 or 20 minutes from where they live, the rest of us are farther. And she's the one that did the picking up and taking the doctor's visit.

One of the husbands was an HR person, a few were teachers, one is a psychiatrist, one is a radiologist...oh, and one has a truck...and then two dollies. And he's terrific with regard to fixing things. My husband is a computer specialist.³⁶⁷

So, they were having some health insurance issues. My husband's retired from being a broker for small group health insurance. So, he got on the phone with (the father) and they talked over steps he needed to take in calling the insurance and insisting on, you know, talking to somebody higher up. So, we helped him kind of get through that.³⁶⁸

Janet was a retired kindergarten and primary grade teacher who worked in inner city schools throughout her career. In her first school, she worked in Long Beach, which at the time had the largest Cambodian population outside of Cambodia. Later, she taught at a school with many Latino families. Janet had worked on finding a free and walkable preschool for the son, talking with Head Start in nearby school districts and finding other preschool programs, but she couldn't find a placement.

But now, I'm concerned, they're moving. I think they'll be in a bigger school district. So, once I know they're there and exactly where they are then that's my goal to get him into a preschool because he's language developing. Mom doesn't speak English. So, he's home

³⁶⁶ Deborah.

³⁶⁷ Deborah.

³⁶⁸ Janet.

all day with a non-English speaker...so to me, that's kind of like my goal, regardless of the fact that, you know, essentially, we're not working as cohesively with them once the year is up. But to me, that's a really important thing I need to make sure is in place.³⁶⁹

The relationship between the team and the family was not as close as the team had expected. Each of the five couples on the team had severe cases of COVID, and the newcomer family was busy; the husband working six days a week while working on further education to improve his job prospects, and the wife caring for their two small children.

So, I think that the experience could have been more personally...fulfilling, but at a more intellectual level, at a more rational level it is very fulfilling, because there are people that are... going to be marvelous American citizens. And that's really what your goal is.

I personally wasn't looking for a family-like relationship. So, I know some people wanted to be surrogate grandparents. That wasn't my goal. My goal was to help someone who needed help, and to pay it forward because my family were immigrants, in Canada, from Europe.³⁷⁰

Team 66

The whole Afghan refugee crisis just got me, you know, got my heart. I...was very concerned for all the people that were being displaced because of ...all that was going on in Afghanistan. So yeah, I just my, my heart was just feeling very deeply for the Afghans.³⁷¹

I think my husband and I started talking about it after watching, you know, them trying to just watch those videos of them trying to get out... at the airport...that was just so heartbreaking. And then just really thinking about what that would be like...

And then of course I believe that God brought it about, but then the next few days, random conversations came up with several other couples that were like, Yeah, we were thinking we should do something. And so that's kind of how, you know, it came about was that everybody just kind of started thinking we should do something.³⁷²

In West Lafayette, Indiana, several people wanted to do something to help those who had fled Afghanistan. Andrea and Lisa had seen information on HFR through a friend's Facebook

³⁶⁹ Janet

³⁷⁰ Deborah.

³⁷¹ Lisa, interview with author, Zoom, January 23, 2023.

³⁷² Andrea

post. Lisa mentioned it to her friend Judy at work, asked around at church, and looked around the community to see what resources were in place to support refugees.³⁷³

Most of the team was from one church and knew one another, but Judy and Robert were new to the group. The team spent time together outside of HFR training, mostly on Zoom calls but also at the church to get to know one another. Judy talked about how important that time was, especially with the changes that would come their way in the coming months,

We kind of understood where everybody was coming from, knew a little bit of background about them, what their experiences were, what experiences they had in the different groups. You got to know personalities. You got to know a little bit about their personal life. If they were coming across ...having an issue, would you be able to step in and help them or vice versa.

So, I felt that that probably made us a better team, knowing each other than not knowing anything about each other because we were the outsiders. My husband and I were the outsiders. They didn't know us. But Lisa brought us in. But I felt as a team, it really made us a team.³⁷⁴

A couple from the church had spent time with Muslims overseas and had connections to the Afghan community in West Lafayette. They provided cultural training to add to what HFR had done.

Each team member had a responsibility to fundraise, and several area churches donated to the fund. “And we were talking to different people and churches of all different denominations honestly, donated. It was really cool to see.”³⁷⁵ By December, the team had completed training and fundraising and were ready to be matched with a family. With other teams, HFR had worked with local resettlement agencies through which paperwork could be processed for Afghans to arrive.

³⁷³ Lisa.

³⁷⁴ Judy, interview with author, Zoom, January 15, 2023.

³⁷⁵ Andrea.

We tried several different agencies. And because they were all based in Indianapolis, they didn't have anybody up here. And because they had already taken what they felt like was their capacity, they said, "No, they wouldn't, they wouldn't work with us." And so here, we were all trained. And we were like, you know, this is so disappointing.³⁷⁶

So, the team shifted to going through the Sponsor Circle program. They would need to complete Sponsor Circle paperwork but would work with HFR through a year instead of the minimum three-month Sponsor Circle requirement. Lisa struggled with the shift from having the support of the resettlement agency over the first months of resettlement.

I'm the type of person who wants to have all her ducks in a row before stepping out. The way I looked at it, I thought the Home Team model sounded like it had a better safety net, that we would have an agency, a refugee agency, come alongside us, perhaps provide a social worker that would act on behalf of the agency, and on behalf of the refugee family, who would know more about the ins and outs and network, and resources and that sort of thing. And I thought, "Oh, we would be that person, you know, we would have to act as that person." None of us have direct experience doing that sort of thing.

But I, I looked around our team and saw how capable, how compassionate, how available and just everyone desiring to help. Plus, you know, one of the team members, or a couple of them pointed out, listen, we couldn't get an Afghan family, I think it's more important to step out and faith and act on this so that we can help perhaps a Ukrainian family who would want to come here, let's just let's do this.

And so, it took a step of faith on my, probably all our parts, but I think I was having.... I was one of the ones who was having maybe me and another member of the team, we're having a little bit more concern about not having that professional side...³⁷⁷

The team would need more money to be a Sponsor Circle, but with the generosity of the community and their main church, they were confident that they could raise more money if needed. They applied for the program, filling out the welcome plan and application. When an Afghan family of five was assigned to them, they had to say no when they didn't have housing adequate for a family that large. That family was matched with a newly formed team from another church in West Lafayette.

³⁷⁶ Andrea.

³⁷⁷ Lisa.

Afghans were choosing large cities with more robust Middle Eastern or Afghan populations. The team had made connections with local Afghans and the mosque which helped the other team but Afghans considering coming chose other locations and Sponsor Circles.

The team considered stepping away, Andrea recalled,

Yeah, we were this close. We were literally this close. When Ukraine happened, we were about ready to just say, "Well, this isn't going to work." You know, we wanted to do it. We trained for it. We had planned for it to happen in January. And now it's, you know, April, May, and our lives, you know... A lot of us said, "We can do this, you know, in this period of time because we don't have as much going on or whatever." And so, it was kind of a timing thing for a lot of us that we felt like, "Oh, now we're... in a different place, or months later, or whatever. We thought we'd get somebody in December."³⁷⁸

Each time an Afghan family was considering them, Austin let the team know, and Andrea would work on housing,

It was super frustrating because the biggest piece of that is housing. Right around here it is hard to find. And I'm sure that's true anywhere, but it's very hard to find affordable housing, especially with students and the cycle of the large university here. It cycles only in... January and in the summer.

We'd hear from HFR, "Well, there's a family considering," and I'd run around for a week trying to find an apartment, trying to find whatever, just have something, and then we'd hear no, they decided not to go (with us).

That happened.... I don't know how many times that happened. Over and over and over it happened. Several times we had housing all lined up, and they said no, and then by the time we got the next call that housing was gone. I mean, anything around here is gone in two days.³⁷⁹

In May, Austin asked if the team would consider sponsoring Ukrainians. Andrea recalled,

My belief is another God thing was, we had already been talking about that, "Hey, if the opportunity came up to do Ukraine, what would you guys think?"

We really had to talk our team back into Ukraine. But the plight of the Ukrainians was just as heartrending for us. I said, "Let's just see what happens. And maybe this is what the Lord wanted for us all along. And we actually had one member of our team, for good reason, one couple quit, and said, "We just can't do this going forward."

And we said, "That's all right. We totally understand." They had a very good reason, something going on in their life... So I said, "Well, can I just call you? Can I just call for advice?"

³⁷⁸ Andrea.

³⁷⁹ Andrea.

So then when we actually got assigned, they're like, "Oh, well, we'll just do it." They'd met the couple. And they're like, "Oh, my gosh, they're so great. We're just doing it." So that was really fun. But, yeah, it was discouraging to wait for six months for sure.

Ukrainian sponsorship involved a commitment of financial sponsorship for two years instead of one, which Andrea and her husband did. Robert worried about the financial liability,

It's the money part. Finding out...that we're going to be responsible for whatever group we get for two years, one shape or form somehow, you know, or if they run out of money, you know, and then I'm retired...So that could be, you know, a financial burden on everybody. So that kind of worried me.³⁸⁰

The couple, Victor and Irena, arrived three weeks later.

The West Lafayette team was the first to commit to a year-long Ukrainian Sponsor Circle through HFR. Austin met with them on Zoom before the arrival, reviewing the resettlement plan and then met weekly. Andrea, as the team leader, communicated more frequently, texting or calling to trouble-shoot as issues arose,

And I think it's challenging for HFR, and probably for any of these organizations, because states do things differently. So, Indiana was doing things differently than California... than other states and the sequencing, and the services available, and how to get those and stuff...So we'd have to call around the different offices and find somebody who really knew what to do.

They had Victor and Irena apply for work permits the day after their arrival. "We're getting in here, and we're applying right this minute. Sorry, you're overwhelmed... but we're doing this." Irena's permit came in the expected three months. but Victor's didn't. "And we were convinced that it was lost." Andrea called Indiana state representatives weekly, "I mean, I was on a first name basis with, you know, several of the offices I called and they were like, "Oh, hey." They'd recognize my voice. It was that bad. I'd call weekly. "Hi, Andrea, sorry,

³⁸⁰ Robert, interview with author, Zoom, January 15, 2023.

nothing."³⁸¹³⁸²The team arranged for the couple to volunteer with Habitat for Humanity while they waited. Victor's background was in construction, so he was able to learn American construction while the woman worked sorting and painting furniture.

A major frustration was Indiana's requirement that any medical treatment, including shots or vaccinations, be done at the Marion County Health Department in Indianapolis, two hours away. "It was very difficult for us to get them to Indianapolis. We did get the first two, and we spent hours there. I mean, four to five hours just for the physical part."³⁸³

Judy recalled added stress that day,

They brought some Russians in at the time that we had our Ukrainian group. And they pulled me out of the room, and they said, "Is it okay for us to bring some... we're going to be bringing some Russians in. Do you think your group will be able to handle you know, is there... what's their feeling towards Russia right now?"

And I said, "Well, I'd have to ask them." I said, "I, you know, I mean, Russia blew their house away." So, I said, "I don't think they're gonna really like them." But I said, "I need to ask them." And it was a little bit uncomfortable, because you could tell the Russians knew the Ukrainians (were from Ukraine), and the Ukrainians knew the Russians (were from Russia), but yet we were all in the same boat.

So, they were here because they didn't want to be in Russia. And mine were here because they couldn't be in Ukraine. So, it went well. But it was an unexpected event that I felt could have been uncomfortable for my people.³⁸⁴

When a Home Team at another church was matched with a family, the medical person was a young nurse with children who insisted, "We are not doing this. We are absolutely not taking these people down there (to Indianapolis). You guys figure it out. You call the Health Department here in Tippecanoe County, and you figure it out, because we're not doing it."³⁸⁵

³⁸¹ Andrea.

³⁸² Andrea.

³⁸³ Judy.

³⁸⁴ Judy.

³⁸⁵ Andrea.

Andrea says she was much more sympathetic to refugees, as well as anyone who has to navigate our system of social services and immigration regulations.

I went to the Social Services Office, and sat there and filled out, you know, the forms with them, and I really don't know, like..., One, to do it in a language that's not your own. I don't know how people do it. I really don't. I have no idea.

Because it's my language. And I could hardly... The people in the office were super nice. And so that was great. But you know, it was a lot. Yeah, just a lot of the stuff that they have to do in a language that's not their own. And ... how do they even, how do they even know these medical things that they're supposed to be getting done? Like the TB tests, they gotta get done right away. You know, how do they know that? I mean, how do they know how to get that done?³⁸⁶

Lisa spoke of the importance of Andrea's leadership of the time through the changes and challenges,

Yeah, decisive, inclusive... getting our input, and then being decisive about a decision. We've never had a situation where she's got to do something contrary to what the team wants to do. She's good at gaining consensus and trying to trust the rest of us. So, she trusts her team."³⁸⁷

Volunteer and Personnel Perspectives

Recruitment

How Volunteers Heard about Home Teams

When asked how they heard about HFR's Home Teams, seventeen of the thirty-three survey respondents answered that it was through their faith community. Linda, a member of a Unitarian Universalist congregation heard through her minister. "The minister is on our team...she knew somebody who knew about it. And so, she brought it to the congregation and basically said, "Here's an idea of something we could do. We need five people." And, you know,

³⁸⁶ Andrea.

³⁸⁷ Lisa.

we went from there.’³⁸⁸ Carol was attending Saddleback Church, and “they explained that they have a mission and ministry with refugees, and specifically at that time, they were talking about Afghan families.”

Eight heard through friends. Janet, from Home Team 55, talked about hearing through friends that started getting together weekly during COVID to stream a movie and talk about it.

So, in these three years, we watch a movie every week that we stream... You know, we start with talking about politics and everything else, like the first twenty minutes, and then we get in a movie. And somehow that came up, and I think maybe Deborah knew about it. I think Deborah knew about it through her temple. I think it started being talked about at temple. And so, she said, “Would anybody want to do it?”³⁸⁹

Judy volunteered at a center for Adults with Disabilities where her friend, Lisa, worked,

So, we would run into each other. And we got to talking about the Afghan refugees and how we couldn't stand watching TV. We couldn't stand seeing the kids. We couldn't stand seeing the crying...the climate, we just couldn't handle it.

And she said, "I know I wish we could get involved in something." And I said, "Yeah, I wish we could too." So, one day I went in to visit and she said, "Hey, I got an idea. You know, Andrea has a thing coming on and, and we can get involved in it. Would you want to sign up?" She says, "You know, they do a background check. And they'll talk to us. And you know, we have some people from the church," she goes, "Would it bother you to be with people from our church?" Because I'm from a different church, and I said, "No." I said, "That'd be fine with me."³⁹⁰

Others heard through groups: The Orange County Jewish Coalition, an Interfaith Council, and through the Haitian Bridge Alliance. Three stated they heard directly from HFR, two through online sources.

³⁸⁸ Linda, interview with author, Zoom, January 4, 2023.

³⁸⁹ Janet.

³⁹⁰ Judy.

Volunteer Motivations

Twenty out of thirty-three of survey respondents named wanting to help, do practical good, or give back to others as their main motivation. Six named the specific plight of those fleeing Afghanistan. Three named family's experiences as refugees to the US. "My grandparents emigrated from Eastern Europe & sponsored nieces. My parents came to the US as refugees. I was a refugee many years ago."³⁹¹

My parents were Cuban refugees in 69. Our support system was strange because we are part of a very big extended family. My mom has eight brothers and sisters. One had emigrated to Spain, one stayed in Cuba with grandmother. The mom of them all didn't leave. So that one stayed. And then the rest were all in Florida. Except for one that was in California.

When we left, our freedom flight is what they called it, we went to Mexico. And then in Mexico, the US Air Force put us on a bus to Texas, Metamora, Texas, and then each family got air flights to anywhere they wanted, where their sponsorship was in the United States. And then from there, then you were on your own.

Well that uncle in California, within a couple hours called my dad said you have a job, you should start work on Monday. There's a school that's two blocks from our house, and the kids can start on Monday. You can stay in our apartment, and they were a family of four in a two-bedroom apartment. But they said you can stay in an apartment until you figure it out. So, we came to California. Shortly after that my uncle got a job offer in Florida and left.

So here we were in California with nobody except that there were two Cuban families who lived in the same apartment building who took us under their wing, and they did everything that Home for Refugees does for people. That's what they were doing for us, helping with getting a job...translating forms ...their kids became our friends. So just having those families made the difference between us succeeding and thriving in a new place or just feeling isolated.³⁹²

Some responses were practical, "My wife and I like helping people. We had a group of about ten people we knew, and it seemed like something we could do that would be helpful to three families. I was already mentoring the young man, so it was easy to join the team."³⁹³

³⁹¹ Survey responses.

³⁹² Anna, interview with author, Zoom, January 10, 2023.

³⁹³ Survey responses.

I'm a big hands-on person, you know, I live a pretty privileged life. And I could come up with money to send people or, you know, read books and that kind of stuff. But I get really kind of frustrated with that. And it's like, if I can meet some people and actually do something specific, to help them out. I like that...My mom...(was) a court appointed special advocate. I just, I try to follow my mom. It was like, we always joke that she went around town with her hand up saying, you know, if no one else is gonna do it, I have to do it and I just, you know...(if) I can...I should.³⁹⁴

I'd been in a service industry pretty much all my life, dealing with people. I knew that I would have no problems, whether they're Afghans or African or Ukrainian, or whoever it was. I was already great at talking to people who didn't open up the conversation somehow, you know. Everybody likes a cat or a dog or, you know, cars or boats or floors, walking and hiking. I always find something to talk about with somebody, you know, about anything.³⁹⁵

Compassion for those fleeing their homes came through in responses, specifically in response to the Afghan and Ukrainian crisis.

Sorrow over the Afghan crisis, then sorrow over the Ukrainian refugee crisis. Help these desperate people. The plight of Afghans when the US military pulled out of their country. "It broke my heart watching people flee their country. I think so I think my husband and I started talking about it after watching, you know, them trying to... just those videos of them trying to get out, you know, at the airport, and stuff that were just so heartbreaking. And then just really thinking about what that would be like."³⁹⁶

Some tied their motivation to faith.

And then there was this opportunity to actually do something hands on. You know, I mean, if for no other reason, it's what Jesus tells us to do. Matthew 25 what you do for the least of these you do to me or for me³⁹⁷ And then of course I believe that God brought it about.³⁹⁸ Desire to help others, love others like God loves us. I felt a need to respond and offer help as a response to my faith. Our Rabbi is always reminding us that in the Torah, how many times it talks about the stranger.³⁹⁹

³⁹⁴ Linda.

³⁹⁵ Robert.

³⁹⁶ Andrea.

³⁹⁷ Jean.

³⁹⁸ Andrea.

³⁹⁹ Survey responses.

Training

Training One

Whether taking place over four weeks, or in one day, Home Teams participated in four one to one-and-a-half-hour-long training sessions. The first session covered the basics of a Home Team: five team members, a three-hour commitment per week with the goal of resettling a family during their first year with the guidance of their Home Team coach, and fundraising for the family's Relief Fund and coaching.

Training covered HFR's mission: "To empower refugees to sustain new homes, find new hope and fully experience life," its vision "for every refugee to have a home that supports safety, freedom, and dignity," and the guiding belief that, "within every city where a refugee family resettles there will be the resources to help them find a place to call home through the support of their new community." HFR's distinctives were named as "guided by faith, caring volunteer teams as our method, and holistic approach to well-being."⁴⁰⁰

The people that HFR aimed to help are forcibly displaced people applying for protection: refugees, asylum-seekers, Iraqi or Afghan Special Immigrants (SIV), and Humanitarian Parolees/Evacuees. Causes of persecution that caused people to apply for protection were race, religion, national origin, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group. In the training, HFR outlined a pathway to citizenship for each status.

Refugees who came through a resettlement agency had a caseworker for 90 days who registered them for core services. They received financial support through the US government. Refugees had access to full social services, while those with Humanitarian Parole and asylum seekers had varying eligibility.

⁴⁰⁰ HFR Team Training 1, PowerPoint.

Main team roles for Home Teams included: adult job coach, health/social service advocate, financial coach, adult ESL/conversation partner, and child education advocate. The team offered practical help as well as friendship. Flexibility was stressed. “We already know some things will not go as planned during your Home Team’s year.”

When asked which aspects of HFR preparation were new and/or helpful, only a few mentioned this initial information, most recalling the more practical later sessions. Some of this first training had been a part of informational sessions, and yet for some the overview and basics were a helpful part of their preparation,

All of it was new information to me. Overview of the pilgrimage of the average refugee to the United States. Understanding the basics, including the role of the resettlement agency and process. Understanding how HFR worked. Review of HFR mission and support model. I didn’t know the legal process and laws. All the immigration requirements and social services available.⁴⁰¹

Training Two

The second training session covered team communication and fundraising. The main platform for ongoing communication within the team was Workplace, a platform that allowed for communication in a Facebook-like platform. Monthly meetings were held on Zoom. A WhatsApp group chat was used between the team and refugees. The fundraising requirement before placement was added in 2022, and the fundraising for coaching was added in the fall of 2022 with the rapid expansion of the Home Team program for Afghan Allies. Previously, HFR fundraised for operational and coaching expenses through small fundraisers and their annual gala.

⁴⁰¹ Survey responses.

Each Home Team had their own HFR account for donations and each team member was to ask twenty friends and family to give. Team members were asked to not use their own funds during the year but to give through the team account for family needs.

The teams were taught that their primary goal through the year wasn't raising funds for the family, "but to learn what their needs were and help them find resources and put them in touch with services.

Some expressed discomfort with fundraising,

To me, I've never done anything like that before... try to get donations from other people ...I don't have any experience with it. They did give us a form letter, which was nice. But mostly I'm sending it to my family members... I just didn't want to send them a form letter without calling them...I felt, how do you approach people? Something like that, you know, I know, there's... I know the benefit of helping people, whether from other countries, war torn, and all that or just even local homeless people or whatever. But how to exploit, put that in words, I'm not real good. We did get money right away. So, it kind of made me feel a bit better. We didn't have the pressure of having to get more than needed.⁴⁰²

But you know, we had really generous friends, which was wonderful. And tried not to be upset about friends that didn't donate, you know how that works. But you know, it's hard to raise \$10,000. And now, Deborah had looked into helping Ukrainian refugees. It's 20,000 now and so we're deferring. I mean, unless... I don't belong to a temple. The others do. So, you know, if they find out about a temple group, and I could help with the temple group, I would do that. But it's a lot of money.⁴⁰³

Most found that people were responsive to the need,

Church members helped with donations. ... It was mostly individual members donating. And they allowed us to put something in the newsletter just kind of explaining what we were doing, and people donated toward that. The team members raised money. Also, interestingly, and amazingly, we had several other churches donate to the fund, so not just church members, but actual churches donated. So that was super cool.⁴⁰⁴

I basically hit up physicians because I knew they had the money. And I had worked for them. So, we did it. They gave us a letter, which was very helpful. We sent a letter out. And so, I felt that that was good. We raised the money pretty quick.⁴⁰⁵

⁴⁰² Robert.

⁴⁰³ Janet

⁴⁰⁴ Andrea.

⁴⁰⁵ Judy.

Minda noted in November of 2022, that increasingly, churches were writing the check, taking the responsibility of fundraising off the teams.⁴⁰⁶

Training Three

The third training titled, “The Framework and Skills for Serving,” covered transformational community development and cultural and self-awareness. Principles of community development were taken from *Walking with the Poor: Principles and Practices of Transformational Development*, by Dr. Bryant L. Myers.⁴⁰⁷ Transformational development begins with the understanding that we are all broken, and our brokenness shows up differently in the financially secure and insecure.⁴⁰⁸ The training gave language for the feelings of inferiority and shame that the financially insecure may feel contrasted with the savior-complex those who are financially secure and well-meaning may feel as they navigate relationships with one another. There are three stages of development: relief, rehabilitation, and development, and Home Teams were given scenarios to practice identifying stages and appropriate responses to situations they may face.

Cultural training provided an overview of general categories of cultural differences in low and high-power distance cultures and their approaches to categories like friendships, time orientation, and communication styles.

⁴⁰⁶ Minda, interview with author, Zoom, November 10, 2022.

⁴⁰⁷ Myers, Bryant L. 2011, *Walking with the Poor: Principles and Practices of Transformational Development*. Rev. and updated ed. Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books.

⁴⁰⁸ Myers uses transformational development instead of the traditional term development. He writes that most think of development as material or social change and is sometimes understood as a synonym for Westernization or modernization. This model of development addresses some concerns of Luke Bretherton around Western concepts of humanitarianism.

I think that the thing that was the most new to me was the idea of thinking in terms of what their experiences might be like... how coming to a new country speaking, potentially, a new language. The culture, how different cultures do things...thinking about... how are we going to help them find the grocery store that has the food that they like that kind of, you know, nitty-gritty type stuff? That was new for me.⁴⁰⁹

Survey responses that answered how community development and cultural training was helpful to them included

Different ways to keep the dignity of the family we help intact. Examples: accepting gifts from them even if I think they are more needy than I, valuing cultural differences. when helping hurts, learning about enabling rather than making them dependent on us, how to care for refugees and lead them towards independence, healthy models of support for families, and caution against enabling behavior. Hearing about potential cultural differences to be aware of.⁴¹⁰

Several coaches discussed the importance of this training for their teams and how they come back to it throughout the team year.

So, let's say a family member reaches out to a team member, the team member will just take care of what they need or, "You need clothes, I'm going to go buy it for you right now."

So, our practice is to ask the refugee family, "Oh, what have you done," and if they exhausted their resources, then that's when the team members say, "Okay, I'll discuss it with the team and see how we can help." And then you discuss it with the team, the team comes to a decision and then goes back to the family.⁴¹¹

And so, for some of these teams, they never get out of the relief stage. Because in the way they see the refugees they might have preconceived notions or perceptions that, "Oh, they need all the help that they can't do things on their own." So, I see some teams really struggling with a savior complex, they don't realize they have it. They tend to rescue the family. They don't give the space for the family to learn to do things on their own.⁴¹²

⁴⁰⁹ Linda.

⁴¹⁰ Survey responses.

⁴¹¹ Eric, interview with author, January 20, 2023.

⁴¹² Alixia.

Training Four

The final training for Home Teams provided an overview of the team year and then moved into the specifics of team roles and tasks. The team year begins with a welcome meal with the family. At the beginning, teams may meet with coaches weekly, but meetings eventually move to monthly. There is a mid-year check-in and eleven-month debrief and then an end of year anniversary meal with the family. HFR notes that the beginning half of the year is more task oriented, while the second has more activities that are oriented towards friendship.

The care plan listed tasks and timelines under the categories of housing, arrival, social and health services, general, transportation, ESL, children's education, finances, and job. Timelines for the completion of tasks range from day of arrival to ongoing. Typical team roles were adult job coach, health and social services advocate, financial coach, adult ESL homework and conversation partner, and child education advocate. One Home Team member was assigned to take photos and video clips during the year, and one to check that volunteer hours were logged weekly. The Care Plan was the working document for the year, with coaches working through roles and tasks with the team at their meetings.

In responding to the question of which aspects of preparation were new and/or helpful, nine out of the thirty-three survey respondents named this session.

Knowing which roles are needed. Dividing up the roles. The team's responsibilities and then each person's responsibilities. The HFR care plan was particularly helpful. All the details about what I'd be getting involved in."

I think the whole division of labor. And then we went on to actually take on the positions... we went in with feelings of, "but I'm not sure I could do that, or I'm good at that. I could never do that." And then once it was established that we would have our own areas that we were expected to do, and that if we couldn't do them, because there was also the worry of, "What if I'm away... Or what if I have visitors? Or, you know, is that going to fall through the cracks? And then there was the assurance that there will be backup people for each of those. If I couldn't do it, then another member said, "Okay, I'll be the second for that." So that assured us.⁴¹³

⁴¹³ Deborah.

Some volunteers named specific areas where more training would have been helpful,

More specific training on things like DMV, IDs, passport, green card processes, health insurance and welfare. We are navigating all this as we go and some basic training could help! We were gradually made aware of resources, but it took multiple steps and a while to understand. Perhaps a...document listing all the different agencies sponsoring them (ASIP, HFR, ILLR, etc.) and resources they have available (WIC, EBT, Medical etc.) will clarify things for us in the beginning on where to look. Provide more specifics and resources about state/federal benefits.⁴¹⁴

Overall, survey respondents had positive impressions of their preparation, “They were quite thorough; I can’t think of any ways they didn’t help,” noting that, “I have seen that much of the learning takes place in real time. The training is great but I have no experience with social services, food assistance, etc. so I guess you have to learn as you go.”

The thing that I really enjoy is just the fact that you have five people, that dynamic, I feel like it really balances out, you always have someone who will be great at the different areas that they select. There's always someone who's just amazing at numbers, someone who knows all the ins and outs about social services and things like that.⁴¹⁵

Challenges

But if I imagine myself as a team member, going into a home team year, I have like this kind of rosy picture of things going well, by getting the kids in school, getting the adults to work. And then once everyone has a job and the bills are being paid, then they can start taking steps for... their own potential career, and they're connected in their own community, they made new American friends, then it's gonna go really well. And that's the hope and the expectation.⁴¹⁶

How difficult it can be when you're actually "in the trenches." I don't think it's really possible to fully prepare for that, though. HFR did make every effort to prepare me for that.⁴¹⁷

See, my friend Lisa and I, we laugh. We thought by helping, we would make meals, bake cookies, and do fun things. (Laughter)

⁴¹⁴ Survey responses.

⁴¹⁵ Elena.

⁴¹⁶ Ari.

⁴¹⁷ Survey response to, “What do you wish you had been prepared for but weren’t?”

So...you know, two or three weeks into it, and she goes, "What happened to those cookies we were gonna make?" Well, I said, "I know. It's completely different from what we thought..."⁴¹⁸

Main challenges identified through surveys and interviews were housing, navigating social services, finding jobs, the communication and relationship between the team and newcomers, and the commitment level of team members. Housing, social services, and jobs were practical steps that tended to proceed in order. The relationship between volunteers and newcomers developed over time, and lack of volunteer commitment was often a challenge later in the team year, after the beginning urgency of necessary tasks in the first weeks.

Housing

Whether teams were in Southern California or the Midwest, finding housing that arriving families could afford was often named as a main challenge. Ari, an HFR Coach, was working with his first Home Team on housing,

I was looking for housing. And apparently, I haven't been here long enough, but everyone tells me horror stories about trying to find housing for the families. Like that is the hardest thing and the worst thing... and so this is a Ukrainian family on humanitarian parole. So, because of that, we have to help with the housing even though for the most part HFR has said we're not doing housing, but with these particular families, we have to....So the search for housing became very... dramatic. And, yeah, there's a lot of like, kind of pushback and a lot of meetings (with the Home team), like a lot of meetings, just trying to work through issues and say, "Well, we need it to be this way. Like, this is what we've seen works."⁴¹⁹

Maddie, working with Sponsor Circles across the US, encouraged teams to connect with people in the community for help, "If it was, "Oh, yeah, we're still looking for housing, like they were staying in guest housing or something like that." It was a reminder, "Oh, do you have any friends who are landlords, you know what I mean? Do you have any way to talk to private

⁴¹⁸ Judy.

⁴¹⁹ Eric.

landlords who own their property, instead of maybe an apartment complex or something like that?”⁴²⁰ A team out of a California church, “Found housing pretty quickly because a team member friend wanted to rent his house specifically to refugees.”⁴²¹

Some newcomer families found housing through their own connections. “The wife in this family, like at the time, a twenty-seven-year-old mom of two, was so unbelievably resilient and self-sufficient. She wound up finding the apartment.”⁴²² For Team 55, “There were no apartments available even at a higher rate. We sort of said, “Okay, we'll go as high as this,” but then this young man found an apartment...he was living with his sister, and there was one that opened up.”⁴²³

Some families found housing so expensive in Southern California that they were “considering relocating...a thing where like, the teams have fundraised... for the family, they have been waiting. And then within the family arriving, it's only a few weeks before they're saying we want to move.”⁴²⁴

Navigating social services

For those responsible for social services and medical care, understanding and navigating the process of getting benefits was a challenge. When asked, “What do you wish you had been prepared for but weren't?” responses included

The sheer amount of health care needs. We had the challenge of getting dental and medical care for the sponsored person. Specifics about benefits (Medical, Cal Fresh,

⁴²⁰ Maddie.

⁴²¹ Alixia.

⁴²² Jean.

⁴²³ Deborah.

⁴²⁴ Elena.

ASIF) like their health coverage, duration, levels, and requirements. Basics on how Medical and insurance works, vaccines needed before school enrollment, dental insurance. I had the same questions the refugees did. I'd appreciate HFR giving some basic materials or training about things that are and aren't covered with MediCal insurance.⁴²⁵

One respondent from California who worked in the health care system detailed what she would like to see for California teams,

If most of the families are in California, I think trainings that are literally about like, here's the breakdown of medical... This is what it means to be in a medical group... general things that Medicare covers think that they don't cover it already. We all know that health insurance is extremely complicated, and there's a big learning curve. But if there was like, one basic, recorded training that ... the health services liaison, that would be really helpful, just because the coaches tend to have information.⁴²⁶

With Sponsor Circles located across the US, coaches and teams struggled with different systems, training, and access to resources. Some local government and service organizations were unaware of the program or what the Afghan or Ukrainian arrivals qualified for.

Working with the local government is really difficult. Just because not everybody's trained the same way in every state. And then in every county, some counties... have... less access to resources, some counties have less training, less staffing. ... That's been hard.

The Sponsor Circle program is a new program, and it's not the same as working with families that come from resettlement agencies.

They didn't understand the program on the local level, like when they were going to sign up for their benefits, where ... they have it written in legislature that they qualify for this, this... benefit... on a federal level, and then statewide, maybe they have extra things as well, but they would get denied.

And then it was so hard because they came back, and they're volunteers who gave up time off work... are driving them and taking them to these appointments. And they'd say, "We just got denied benefits. But didn't you say that they are (qualified)?"⁴²⁷

Andrea, from the Indiana Sponsor Circle sponsoring Ukrainians, spoke of the difficulty of navigating state services and departments,

⁴²⁵ Survey responses.

⁴²⁶ Sara.

⁴²⁷ Maddie.

Indiana was doing things differently than California, and we were kind of the first... it was just different than other states... the sequencing, and the services available, and how to get those. We'd call an office and we'd be like, "This is what you need to do." So, we'd have to call around the different offices and find somebody who really knew what to do.

At one point I called... an Indiana State office and said, "Well, I have Ukrainian refugees." And the person goes, "Well, I was told we wouldn't get any Ukrainian refugees in Indiana." "Well, you were told wrong," I said, "We are a Sponsor Circle," and he's like, "What the heck is a Sponsor Circle." (And I) walked him through what that was and how we did it.⁴²⁸

Austin, the HFR Coordinator for Sponsor Circles and the Indiana team's coach, worked with State Refugee Coordinators across the US, working out issues and establishing communication, "I had a meeting with the state refugee coordinator in Maryland yesterday. And he just said, "Hey, we love what you're doing. Just whenever you get new groups in Maryland, please let us know." And I said, "Oh, well, you know, CSH is supposed to be letting you know every time a new family arrives."⁴²⁹

Judy, the medical liaison for the Indiana Sponsor Circle, had helped spearhead a medical immigration clinic at Purdue University. Her previous experience helped in navigating the system.

If I wouldn't have had my Purdue email address, I think I would have had a more difficult time. Because when I would email these people from Purdue... I got an answer real quick. When I emailed them, it's just Judy, I would never hear back from anybody.

And then, they go through a physical. We verify their immunizations, which I was fine with immunizations because I had been doing it for so many years. Then you were supposed to take them to Indianapolis to a facility that would do this physical on them.

And after they went through the physical... I felt they were taking advantage of the refugees because they had Medicaid. They were charging for things that didn't need to be charged for. I'm an immigration person, so I'm looking at the bills. And I'm thinking this was not a necessary test... they did some of the testing that would have been needed in Africa... I was disappointed in it.

So, when we brought this next group in, and we only brought the girl in, the other one was sponsored by another church, but I'm helping them with the medical. I was quite adamant with the state (about only doing necessary testing).

⁴²⁸ Andrea.

⁴²⁹ Austin.

Jobs

You have some people with really great resumes and their home countries, but then they come here. There's a language barrier, and so it's hard to transfer certain skills. I mean, I'm in seminary, so I get a chance to, hopefully, pursue my dream, but there are people who might have been living their dream life and their own country or they were close to it. But when they come here, they might not get that chance.⁴³⁰

Four of the survey respondents worked with newcomers on building job skills or finding work, and volunteers with other areas of responsibility named finding work as a challenge. When families lost jobs during COVID, HFR fundraised to help support them.

Linda, from the Unitarian Universalist congregation in California, spoke of the difficulties of language, lack of employment opportunities, and racism as barriers to employment for a newly-arrived family from Afghanistan,

The hardest thing was helping them find jobs. It's a family of nine. Four young men trying to get jobs. The Minister (of the congregation) has worked in HR, and she was a recruiter ...so she helped them do their resumes.

There are four brothers, and they're all quite proficient... and I think that's been the issue with their job search is that they're not...I mean, they're qualified to do things. One of them is an architect, and they're educated. But part of that is...the language difference.

Part of it, I think, is racism. People see their name, and I really think that that's been an issue, especially because they're applying for jobs online. And I think... you can't, look somebody in the eye and explain what you've done and say, please take a chance on me and, you know, make that personal connection.

The aunt had a very responsible job in Afghanistan, and a government job. She's really bored, and she wants to find a job. But she doesn't have her English... is not as good. She's taking online ESL classes, but that's gonna be a harder thing. She's an older woman, ... she's kind of shy and tentative with her English, and she's getting much better. But, I mean, I can speak English just fine. But I would have trouble finding a job right now.⁴³¹

Janet, from Home Team #55 named finding a job that fit skills and capacity as an ongoing challenge for the team and the newcomer family. The father of the family was taking

⁴³⁰ Ari.

⁴³¹ Linda

courses and writing exams to improve his skill sets, and Janet wondered if a group that was better connected would be more successful in helping him find a better position.

One of the husbands (on the Home Team) was in HR, so he worked with (him) on refining his resume... so we were lucky to have some incredible skill groups and so maybe a larger community, you might have more help with finding the job. You know, I mean, the sad thing for us is that he's even still, he's still in just an hourly job. Way, way below what he's capable of.⁴³²

For those waiting on a work permit, the challenge was in the backlog. The Indiana Sponsor Circle helped the Ukrainian couple find the volunteer opportunity that fit their skills at Habitat for Humanity while waiting for their permits. When Victor's permit was delayed, the Team was able to continue financial support until he was able to work.

The wait for a work permit can take years for those seeking asylum. For George in California, the young man from Cameroon was still waiting,

For some reason his case is not moving. And now he does volunteer work. He's gotten all these certificates. The Home Team paid and Home for Refugees paid for him to go and get a certificate in planning, project management. So, he's ready to go...he does a lot of volunteer work.⁴³³

Communication and Relationship between Team and Family

Wife in non-English speaking and was unable to communicate with us. Only communication was through my husband. Understanding her English and trying to figure out if she understood my explanation.

Two challenges that come to mind...while this refugee family speaks English, there were times that we likely missed each other with some translations. Also, I have not fully understood some of the cultural differences between us and hope that has not caused any hurt. Language issues make it difficult at times to drill down into these cultural issues to confirm whether or not any hurt was caused by my insensitivity/ignorance. The Language barrier was difficult at first.⁴³⁴

⁴³² Janet.

⁴³³ George.

⁴³⁴ Survey responses.

Some teams found that newcomers were unable to work on learning English. Deborah, from team 55, had a background in ESL and had planned to do English as a second language with the wife, but “she has a little child, and she has a newborn, and she's very shy, and so I was never called on to do that.”⁴³⁵

Other newcomers were ready to learn. A team member on Carol’s Home Team worked with Daria on English. The family had lived in a refugee camp for ten years where she had taken lessons, “so her English is quite good. She wants to continue... she doesn't want to do it online. She wants to do it in person.”⁴³⁶

Robert spoke of realizing that even though the Victor and Irena had basic English, they didn’t have full comprehension,

They don't really understand everything you're telling them... They don't understand everything. If they can interpret.... if they put it in any mail, in writing, they can turn it into Ukrainian language and read it and probably understand it better. But just you and I talk, and they're only catching half of, understanding half of, what you're saying. That's the hard part. We gotta realize and deal with.⁴³⁷

Though language caused barriers, volunteers and newcomers used technology to work through it. Judy learned to use language apps through newcomers, “I took one of them to the doctor just last week. And he handed me his phone to type in the App. And ahead of it, I could see where he had emailed one of the people in the house and it said, "Help me, I don't think she's understanding me." I had to laugh.”⁴³⁸

Some relationships formed as the time was taken to work through the barrier. Anna used phones and translators as she went to government offices with Ava, who speaks Farsi.

⁴³⁵ Deborah.

⁴³⁶ Carol.

⁴³⁷ George.

⁴³⁸ Judy.

The funniest time we had was when we were filling out papers for WIC, and we were told that there was going to be a translator. Well, the translator that they got us was for a Middle Eastern language that she doesn't speak... so, the woman at the WIC office was amazing. She said, "Okay, you've been waiting three weeks for this translator...are you willing to do this with... how do you communicate with her?"

So, I said, "Well, just through our phones." So, the woman at the WIC office, and we're doing all this through zoom...we have an iPad screen with her face. She has her phone on translator so that she can receive our messages and then translate back to English. She's sending the messages in English to me. I'm translating back to her. And then she is typing on her phone. She's typing the answers to the questions. ... it was like we had four different screens...

A form that usually takes 10 to 30 minutes to fill out...we were there for an hour and fifteen minutes, we went through this. So that was a huge bonding thing. I had been saying her little boy's name(wrong) the longest time, and she hadn't corrected me, but since it was a formal form, she thought it's important that it's spelled correctly. The lady on the other side said, "Oh, it sounds like how you say a son-in-law." And I translated what it meant to her...that's a phrase or a word, she's never forgotten, she knows how to say a son-in-law in English now. Sounds like her son's name.

So, that day, we laughed so much, because ... we were getting things wrong, and she was directing us and so on. But I think that that was kind of like a turning point, because she was the one who was supplying the information. She wasn't just receiving; she wasn't the needy person at that meeting. She was the important person at that meeting. And so, she was, she felt, I don't know if the word empowered or what, but she felt kinda like an equal, I think. So, it and we kind of proved to her that, you know, you are part of this, and we want to help you run your family, do your family the way you want to do your family...⁴³⁹

Language was only one of the potential barriers between volunteers and newcomers.

Distance was an issue with some California teams, "It was hard to give a lot when I have little children myself and working as she wanted in home English help...make sure that you have the time and flexibility. You don't know where the refugees will live and it can be far from you."

COVID was a factor for some teams. Some formed during quarantines and didn't meet in person for months, and in Home Team 55, all members fell ill with bad cases of COVID, and only one of the couples lived close to the family.

Maddie, who had worked with Sponsor Circles before shifting to Home Teams spoke of volunteers and newcomers not connecting relationally.

⁴³⁹ Anna.

There's been not a huge number of cases, but some families just don't connect emotionally or on a friendship level with these groups. And it doesn't mean that they don't want to help them, it just makes it look a little bit different. I mean, because they don't, you know, maybe have the same desire or capacity to spend as much time with, you know, the family, the volunteers, or vice versa.⁴⁴⁰

Lisa, on the Indiana Sponsor Circle Team, was responsible for hospitality and wanted to include Victor and Irena in activities, like bringing them to the Fourth of July picnic and getting them acquainted with the town. She had to work through expectations when Victor and Irena communicated to another team member that they wanted to do less socially with the team,

None of us took it offensively...they're a young couple, they got married, you know, within the last... several months ago, when they were here. And they wanted to spend time alone. And they're very independent. And they can figure out things in town and find things to do and that sort of thing

So, then the challenge was finding the balance, and I hope I haven't ... gone too far to not doing things with them, or inviting them, or having dinner or whatever, that sort of thing.⁴⁴¹

Elena's coaching through relationship issues encourages teams to pursue friendship whether the newcomers need very little help from the Home Team or a great deal.

For the teams that feel like the family has already figured out how to do all these different things, so then wonderful. Now we get to focus on your friendship with them. It was so hard. I don't know why. It's like coming to someone's home, and you don't even have to have an agenda or anything. They just hear how they're doing.

Then the ones that are getting overwhelmed. It's also taking that step back and focusing on their friendship because the more that we continue to help them... which is wonderful that we can right now, at some point, these families won't have a team, and we need to get them to a point where they would know how to do things without our help.⁴⁴²

Commitment to the Team

Getting all members to participate equally. Having team members who did not do their job. Team members who didn't "carry their weight."⁴⁴³

⁴⁴⁰ Maddie.

⁴⁴¹ Lisa.

⁴⁴² Elena.

⁴⁴³ Survey responses.

I don't know if they know the reasons, but the people just disappeared and didn't tell them that they weren't going to follow through. And they don't really even know why.

I want to be respectful. But yes, that, you know, just surprises me. People make a commitment, and it's just... these are people's lives.⁴⁴⁴

We've got three team members that have just kind of become MIA. We had one team that kind of had pretty strong conflicts, and one team member wound up dropping out because of that.⁴⁴⁵

Some teams experienced team members not fulfilling their commitment. Speaking of Sponsor Circles in particular, Austin found that expectations were sometimes an issue,

People who signed up to sponsor (who) didn't know fully what it would entail. And so, there's some statements like, "We didn't know it was going to be like this, or had it been like this. Very few, but I have heard, "Had it been like this, I don't know if I would have said yes to sponsorship."⁴⁴⁶

More often, the issue with individual volunteers is busyness and life circumstances.

Some people are just busy, right? Or life is happening. They're dealing with sick friends and sick relatives. And so, they really want to help and do a lot of stuff, but their time is more limited. One person, I'm thinking in particular, I can tell they feel guilty because they haven't been able to do as much as they want to. But, recently, they did like a big thing... I think it kind of fueled them a little bit. I have limited experience, like I'm new, but I would imagine that's probably the most normal thing, right? It's like, life is just happening and you're also trying to help this family that's going through their stuff. And so... being pulled in all these directions.⁴⁴⁷

Maddie identified motivation as a common challenge in working with volunteers.

It's never super easy to work with volunteers in the sense that it's really based on their own motivation...reminding them why they were motivated to do this in the beginning and continuing to inspire them. It's not always the easiest thing because it's dependent on their, sometimes, even emotional attachment to the project. And they said yes, at one point, and so it's just kind of reminding them why you said yes.⁴⁴⁸

⁴⁴⁴ Carol.

⁴⁴⁵ Jean, interview with author, Zoom, January 16, 2023.

⁴⁴⁶ Austin.

⁴⁴⁷ Eric.

⁴⁴⁸ Maddie.

Coaches pointed out the necessity of motivating teams throughout the team year. With so many tasks to complete in the beginning, some teams needed outside motivation in the middle.

Rallying the troops when we're kind of in that middle lull. You know, we're (not) at the beginning or the end. But there's still stuff that needs to be done, and people get sidetracked. And so, let's... can we rein it back in? We've got three team members that have just kind of become MIA. So, let's see, can we maybe rally them or maybe get somebody to step in? I have two teams who I needed to get an outside person to step in to sort of finish because we lost enough people that it wasn't sustainable.⁴⁴⁹

Jean had a team where two or three people were not engaged. The team was problem solving and thought of getting together for lunch to try to increase involvement, but people couldn't find time.

I finally got to the point where I created a solution to the problem. We were at a coaches meeting where I came with that concern, and another coach came with the concern that he has a team that's been waiting for like a year for a family.⁴⁵⁰

So, he suggested, what if some of my team members... what if they jumped in, like on a case by case, you could give them an assignment? Great solution! Minda was like, "You know what? That's totally out the box. But let's give it a try. Let's see how it works."

Themes

Transformational Development

In this role, you'll see what it means to be poor in America, and to walk with someone in poverty in America. And that's not easy for most of us, right? It's uncomfortable, because that's not how we exist, or have existed. And the urge is to try to fix it, or just do whatever to alleviate the uncomfortableness as fast as possible, but we can't do that, because that's actually not what's best for the family. So, I think that reality has been, like, so true. And I think that's the tension for me at this job.⁴⁵¹

⁴⁴⁹ Eric.

⁴⁵⁰ This was a situation with a large church that recruited several teams but due to staffing changes, applications were lost, and the teams reapplied with Home for Refugees. I had interviews with two people on one of these teams who had been matched with a family after redoing their onboarding and training.

⁴⁵¹ Eric.

Coaching teams towards transformational development was the challenge that coaches talked about the most. A posture of transformational development shows concern for positive change in the whole of human life—material, social, psychological, and spiritual.⁴⁵² Where those not accustomed to walking with the poor may move quickly to meet physical needs, coaches spoke at length about working with volunteers to increase newcomers’ connections to their community and taking steps towards agency and independence. Alixia, who has been a coach since March of 2022, spoke at length about working through this challenge with teams.

I would say that's probably been my hugest challenge as a coach is to help them to walk with those who are struggling, and not to always just rush in...

I tell the teams that as you resettle families, you're going to feel all sorts of emotions. Your emotions will be heightened. So, I tell them, “Be aware of those emotions, but also...you're also going to feel a sense of urgency. So, when you're feeling these emotions and you feel a sense of urgency, you're going to make decisions that you may not normally make if you don't Have those factors. I told them, “You know, take a breath.”

A couple of my teams really struggle with walking alongside families who are struggling... something that I've noticed, and I can understand because I grew up in this. So usually, when there is a need, churches are really quick to meet that need, especially financially. They're quick to like, let's say a family member reaches out to a team member, the team member will just take care of what they need, or you need clothes, I'm going to go buy it for you right now.⁴⁵³

When Alixia started coaching, one of her families reached out and said they were out of food. She panicked, “What do you mean you have no food?” As she talked through it with the father of the family, she discovered that it wasn’t that he didn’t have any food,

He had no more money to buy the food that he wanted to eat, because they didn't know how to budget. They basically used their EBT money in one week where it's supposed to last for a month. So, I suggested, “Can you use your cash aid first?” And he said, "Oh, yeah, I can do that." So that's how I dealt with the situation once I calmed down. And I'm like, “Okay, let's talk it through. I realized it's because of a budget, they just spent all their EBT money in one go on foods that are more expensive.”

⁴⁵² Myers, *Walking with the Poor*, 3.

⁴⁵³ Alixia.

One of her current teams had just paid the rent for the family without informing her. She understood their reaction.

And they were just afraid that they were going to get... the family's gonna get evicted. But that's not the case. They're actually...protected. Under California law, they're protected.

So that's why it's so important to discuss it, because if they had discussed it with me, I would have reassured them that's not the case. And HFR will not let families go on the streets. It's not going to happen.

And it was really, it was a hard conversation, because...I understood why they did it, completely understood why they did it. But even having to ask them, "Are you still wanting to commit to HFR's practice?" Because it totally went against our practice.

She shared with the team that because they had opened this door by providing money, the relationship between the team and the family may change. The family may come and ask again.

But they were like, "Oh, no, we made it clear to them that it's just for one month." Next month, they asked the team again, to help with rent. They even asked me personally, the family, if I could help, but of course, I told them I cannot. The team was really disappointed. Because they didn't save their cash for the next rent.

I always incorporate it, retraining just to help them to continue to create new habits or what they're used to in their church. It's like, we just contribute financially, we have the budget, we have the means...⁴⁵⁴

Elena spoke of a team where a team member's parents were refugees, so she connects deeply to what the family is going through, "on a level that a lot of the other volunteers just probably can't connect."

And things will be escalated, you know, like something maybe like sometimes benefits will be cut off, which to us at HFR, that doesn't really scare me. That's something that happens. We just need to submit a form and things will be retroactively...everything will be fine. But for the team members and especially for the family, benefits being cut can be something that's very triggering ...

I think she already knows some of the things that we as Home for Refugees go through in our training where we want to be healthy, not really like doing things for the family. But even though it sounds wonderful as we're saying it, going through it practically, it's a completely different experience. And so, for her, the family can't go with their services cut off just because we are not doing our part.⁴⁵⁵

⁴⁵⁴ Alixia.

⁴⁵⁵ Elena.

Eric reflected on teams dealing with urgent situations.

I think ...the biggest temptation or hurdle for a team, is if something happens on the spot for the family, to where they can't pay for something. The team is naturally tempted to pay on the spot. And one of the coaching techniques...is to prepare beforehand to be ready for that. But even if something does happen on the spot, to be aware of our options. We don't need to pay on the spot right now. It could mean ... going off to the side with a family member, contacting the right group...if the food stamps ran out, contacting the right number and trying to figure out what happened. There have been groups out there that help with various things and calling 211.

It makes the world smaller and makes...we become more aware of our community, our family becomes more aware of our community, if they know what number to call, they know to call 211. If they know how to tap into their own resources, whether it's a mosque or a church, or their own family, or new people as they meet along the way...even for our family, we're not going to be there as the years go by necessarily, in the same capacity... still for them to know about their own community rather than just relying on a very specific person.⁴⁵⁶

Anna shared her experience of learning through mistakes, “I personally got a lot of help from Home for Refugees. I came into this thinking (that) my love language is gifting.”⁴⁵⁷ Her parents had come to the US as refugees from Cuba and she reflected, “maybe it was because of living in poverty for so long.” She volunteered to go shopping with the family with the list of necessary items that the team was providing.

Home for Refugees gave us our first list of things that we need to get for them...And that was one job that I took. So, I went with them to get all their linens, and all the things that are the required stuff.

But then when they looked at, “Oh, look at this rug, it's really cool. Or these pillows for the couch,” things that ... they don't need but they want. I just said, “Just go ahead... I'll do that.” And so, I got the things from the agency money,⁴⁵⁸ and then I bought... almost \$500 worth of things...some of them were gray areas like an ironing board and iron. It is not a necessity per se, but it's nice to have, you know, and a second coffee pot because she... was saying that she drinks tea. He drinks coffee...it's not a coffee pot. It's just a heater for the water.

⁴⁵⁶ Eric.

⁴⁵⁷ Anna.

⁴⁵⁸ Funds that had been raised by the team and put into the HFR account for that family.

She handed in the receipts so she could be reimbursed for the items on the list, specifying that the other items were from her. Her team leader talked with her about it.⁴⁵⁹

About how when I'm acting as the team as a team member, I need to be a team member. Not go rogue. And I'm just saying that on my own, but it can be construed... you are dealing with people that you can't communicate really clearly with, so they may feel...they may think that the agency is giving them this, and so if they're friends with another family, who has a different team, they may say, "You know, why did we (not receive the same things...)

What I thought was so much more important was the idea that we are not to make them dependent, but that we are there to foster their independence, and to help them become independent. And so those are the things that they can aspire to.

Then the team members who are in the financial category can show them how to have... when we get our paycheck, this is how in America, you know, this is we're going to do this percentage for tithing this, this is how much we need for rent and food and just living, and this is what we need for long term savings. And then we're going to have this fund for the throw pillows and the things that we want.⁴⁶⁰

Anna appreciated that her team leader took her aside one on one to talk, in spite of feeling at first like her hand got slapped, "And then it's like, "Okay, no, that was on me," because yes, I wanted them to have all this, but I really got a kick out of being able to do it for them...I did that for me a little bit as well. Which is not what this is about."

Teamwork

Though HFR's ideal is a five-member team, teams ranged from four to ten. From the beginning, roles were distributed based on skills and interest. Deborah was intentional as she recruited her team, noting "the makeup of the team is very important with regard to personality,

⁴⁵⁹ Anna's team was unique in several ways. When their first coach changed positions, Elena began working with them, first through Zooms during quarantine and then in person. Their first family left after four months, and then they were matched with another family. When Elena needed to limit her work for a time because of her immigration status, Minda worked closely with the team leaders, who had previous experience working with refugees in Asia. They started a ministry serving refugees through the church and eventually coached the team with input from Minda.

⁴⁶⁰ Anna.

skills, connections, availability etc.” Her team was reassured that there were backup people within the team in case a team member couldn’t be available.

Anna’s team was particularly diverse in life experience, skills, and ethnicity. Two team members had worked with refugees overseas, and two others were from other countries.

One of the team members...is from Lebanon, and she has worked in Dubai. And she worked in Lebanon for the US ...with the part of the US government that deals with immigration, so she has a lot of information about that.

With finances, like helping the guys find jobs, we have one man who joined because he was a refugee from Vietnam. And his family came as boat people...but he is a business owner, has an MBA and so he's really good with those kinds of things.⁴⁶¹

Elena, who has worked with teams since 2019, enjoyed the dynamic of working with a group, “You always have someone who will be great at the different areas that they select. There's always someone who's just amazing at numbers, someone who knows all the ins and outs about social services and things like that.”

Volunteers as Advocates

Several volunteers spoke of ways the team advocated for the families in administrative processes. For the Indiana team, Judy’s previous experience in the immigration medical field equipped her to recognize when unnecessary tests were given for a Ukrainian couple. When she took another arrival for the tests, she requested the tests be limited and the personnel agreed. Judy was, “was quite adamant with the state.”

Sara told how team members met with a principal so the children could attend the middle school closest to them instead of the one in their district, but two buses away. The team was working on getting free WIFI,

Los Angeles Unified School District ...since COVID, has been offering free WIFI for students because of remote learning. And according to their parent portal, they're not eligible for the free WIFI. Of all people, how are they not eligible? We’re doing a lot of

⁴⁶¹ Anna.

rabbit trail phone calls to the district to try and get to the bottom of why they are not able to get WIFI.⁴⁶²

Carol, a public-school teacher for 37 years, accompanied the family to register their children at the elementary and middle schools, adding her name to the emergency contact list. When one of the thirteen-year old twin boys was being bullied, she asked to speak with an administrator.

We spoke with a vice principal, and I could tell she was just going to be on top of it, which was wonderful. We didn't hear right away from her, but there was a woman we also met in the office. The mom already knew her. She's a teacher with the district...she speaks Arabic, so she and the vice principal called in this one boy, the twin, to talk about what was going on.

The person bullying wasn't in class with either of the twins, so they had no idea who it was... who was doing it. So that took a couple of days. But they did identify him. They had a come to Jesus meeting with the boy and met with the parents as well. I ask every time I see them how it's going, and they say it has not been repeated. So that was yes, it was wonderful. I thought, oh, my gosh, you come to this country, and then you're bullied. So, I was really happy that it was resolved within a couple of days. That was wonderful.⁴⁶³

Volunteers as Cultural Informants

Two interviewees shared stories that illustrated the unique ways that they were able to be cultural informants for newcomers. Anna, who was ten when her family fled Cuba and moved to California, remembered her family's confusion when she was invited to a birthday party with ten girls. In their culture, birthday parties were for family. She recalled this as she helped the newcomer family prepare for a baby shower being hosted for them by another American woman. She explained that in the US, baby showers are for women and older girls, and then she asked if that was ok, giving the family the option of deciding for themselves what they wanted to do.⁴⁶⁴

⁴⁶² Sara.

⁴⁶³ Carol.

⁴⁶⁴ Anna.

George told more than one story about guiding David in understanding the complexities of race in the US. “There were things that I never thought about that would be brand new and have a profound effect on people who weren't from America.”

You remember when the George Floyd situation happened? And the initial stories were that he was at this store, and he had a \$20 bill that was supposed to be counterfeit or whatever. And so, (David) watched, he sees it all in the news, he sees the riots, he sees this... all the stuff, the civil disobedience, everything he sees it going on.

So, one day, I was giving him some money. And he said, Mr. George, can you make sure that I don't have the 20? Can I trade this... I don't really want to have a twenty. And I said, “Well, why not, it's money?” And he said, “Well, that's what that man had, who got killed by the police.”

And that thought would never have crossed my mind. And he was afraid. Yeah, he was afraid to have a twenty and to go into a store, and because he's black, they're going to say it's counterfeit... something would happen to him. And I mean, that was mind blowing to me that that was what he saw and how he thought.

One day George brought a red plaid shirt for David who told him, “Mr. George, I can't wear this, this might get me shot by gun.” George assured him there were no gangs where he lived, but “he was afraid to wear something red, because of the things he had been hearing.”

They don't learn American history. They don't know anything about...America is just this place at the end of the rainbow. But they learn about different history...so they don't know. So, they don't know a lot of what happened in America. They don't know that when they come, they might have to face something different than what they faced in their homelands. So that again, that was something that I had to make an adjustment and make sure that I explain situations that might... he might find it hard to understand in this time period of when he is moved to the US.⁴⁶⁵

Compassion and Trauma

Many responses from volunteers focused on their specific tasks or events, but some described conversations and moments where volunteers were given a glimpse of the trauma that many had come from. The family that Home team 55 worked with had fled Afghanistan quickly, coming back to the airport another day after not getting on a flight. They then spent time on an

⁴⁶⁵ George.

army base before moving to California. Their toddler showed signs of stress for months after their arrival, crying whenever the team was there and he heard his father speaking English.

For some teams, the families seemed to be doing well, and it was easy to forget what they had been through. Judy wondered if future teams should be more aware of resources for psychological support.

And we probably, as a team, maybe neglected the psychological because our young people seemed so well-adjusted, that whenever we would talk to them, they would be very open in expressing themselves.

I took Irena one time to pay a phone bill. And I figured out there was a communication problem, probably through them signing the phone bill contract. And I had never seen our young lady get upset or mad. It was at that time, when I saw her mad, I realized I know nothing about what she really went through. So, we've looked at them, and we think that they're okay. You know, we see somebody... they're eating, they're drinking, they're gaining weight, they look happy.

But I felt the frustration she felt that day with the phone. And that she must feel that when she goes to the grocery store, and she doesn't understand them. She must feel that if she needs medical care, and she doesn't understand them. This is a second language to them every day. She was vulnerable that day, and I got to see her mad, and I thought, "I wonder how mad she was when she found out her house over there wasn't standing anymore. I wonder..." You know, we, but we didn't hear about those things. They kept those into themselves.⁴⁶⁶

When the team sponsored Irena's younger sister, Judy worried about her emotional well-being.

I realized I know nothing about what she really went through. But now we brought her sister over here who's just turned 20, I think. Young. Never been away from her parents or anything. And I think I keep saying to her older sister, "We need to know if she's okay." I want to know. Is she happy? Is she sad?⁴⁶⁷

George and David, the young man from Cameroun, were driving one day when George got a call on the speakerphone. George, a black man, specified before telling the story, "I have all kinds of friends."

⁴⁶⁶ Judy.

⁴⁶⁷ Judy.

A friend called me, and he was a very right-wing Trump supporter. And he's talking about how, you know, it's going to be a war...and I'm laughing. I know this guy, and he's a reactionary. But David is in the car listening.

When I get off the phone David sits quietly for a minute, and then he turns to me and says, "He has no idea of what a civil war is." He said, "I just came from a civil war. They come into your town, and pull people out, and kill them, and shoot them, and chop them with machetes. He said, "What you guys think is a civil war is not civil war."⁴⁶⁸

Ari spoke about how easy it is for teams and coaches to get task-oriented and forget the

trauma that families have gone through. He was struck by a conversation where an Afghan

young woman expressed that she had no hope for her country or her people.

My parents are from India, they're from the region when the British partitioned the region. So, I'm familiar with Pakistani politics, and Afghanistan. So, fortunately, we have some common knowledge.

There's unspoken trauma as we're doing all these things, as we're helping them. And obviously things look good on the outside. We're having a meal. We're laughing, and, you know, sharing, taking all these photos. But there's unspoken trauma.⁴⁶⁹

Not all trauma was in the past. The interview with Elena was delayed because there had been a death in a sponsored family. The father had fallen in Germany when the family was being evacuated and had multiple complications ever sense. The family had been matched with a team, arrived, found safety, and now the father had died. Elena walked with the team through logistics as well as the frustration and grief of all involved.⁴⁷⁰

Issues of Faith

Of the thirty-three survey respondents, twenty-three identified as Christian, four as Jewish, two as Unitarian Universalist, two as non-religious, and one left the field blank. On its website, HFR names the Christian faith as the basis for their beliefs and practices: "Every human is made with dignity, that within every city where a refugee resettles exists the resources to help

⁴⁶⁸ George.

⁴⁶⁹ Ari.

⁴⁷⁰ Elena.

them find a place to call home through the support of their new community. Volunteers from any or no religious faith are involved. Refugees from any or no religious faith are in the program.”⁴⁷¹

When asked how she sees HFR’s Christian faith acted out practically, Jean responded,

I see it in the passion, compassion, and dedication of the coaches. I see it in principles more... I see it just kind of permeates who we are, what we do. It's like the ground that we spring from, grow from, I don't know how else to put it. I don't think we're, I don't think we're pasting Christianity on the thing, the organization. I think we're trying to be followers of Jesus in cooperation with him in restoring the world back to wholeness. And so that's who we are. And that's what we do. That's what I'd like to think anyway.⁴⁷²

George didn’t know that HFR was a faith-based organization when he agreed to join the Home Team that came around David, whom he was already mentoring.

I have worked with faith-based organizations, so it's not an issue. I'm not a religious person, I have no affiliation with any religion. I might not be religious, but I absolutely support and respect the work of religious organizations when they're moving toward good.

...once I got involved, it's one of those things where you get to see the good, and the hearts of people who believe...where it's not a clanging cymbal, where they actually put their faith to work... their heart is in doing and being what they have learned to do and be in their faith system. So, I saw that. I saw people who were moved from their love of Christ and their desire to do the will of God, to reach out to other humans who needed their help, and to do more than the ordinary. So, it actually renews my faith in the godliness of people.

Jean, who worked with teams from different faith backgrounds, had adapted the six-month check-in questions for Jewish teams.

When I started giving the six-month ones to my group, I would share my screen and they would see me typing the responses and all this stuff, and I wasn't going to do that with my Jewish groups. That's offensive. That's hurtful.

If you have a group of Jewish people and the question is, “What does this say about your relationship with Jesus,” or something like that? If I look at my pre-Christian Jewish self, I don't want to see that. I mean... that's not right. Well, I signed on to help an organization that I know is Christian, but I want to be respected for who I am as a Jew. So, I've changed the six month one. I've created a second one for the six months.

⁴⁷¹ “Our Distinctives,” Home for Refugees website, Accessed March 16, 2023.
www.homeforrefugeesusa.org/our-distinctives.

⁴⁷² Jean.

Eleven month one, I was given license to create a new one, but I just haven't had the chance yet. So, I think there needs to be a form for Christians for sure. For Christian groups, use it carefully...and I think there needs to be a form for non-Christian or non-faith like for community groups.⁴⁷³

When the Indiana team was preparing to welcome a family from Afghanistan, they sought out training on Muslim culture and had a speaker explain halal foods. Judy talked with Muslim friend who was the wife of a doctor who then offered,

I'll stock the freezer and refrigerator for them, and I'll buy the halal foods." The families that I had been with (her Muslim friends)...didn't eat halal. And so that was one of the things that I felt, "Boy, I'm really stupid."⁴⁷⁴ The team had made contacts with local Afghans and the local mosque that were then helpful to the team that did welcome an Afghan family, as they partnered with the Muslim community.⁴⁷⁵

Alixia's team was intentional about honoring the family's Muslim faith, which led to overcoming the family's fears that the group's help was contingent on them becoming Christians.

When we've honored their Muslim holidays...when we've been more than agents of this agency...those are the times that have built friendships. And so, when there was a tree lighting at our church for Christmas, they came, and the kids said they wanted to have a Christmas tree in their home. And the parents said, Okay.

And Halloween, they asked about, and they live in Santa Ana, and it's very densely populated. One year there was a very tragic death of a child that was run over in Halloween trick or treating. And so, our church always holds a Light the Night fair, and it's huge. It's a couple of 1000 people come and there are bounce houses and food trucks and games and all kinds of things. And so there have been all kinds of occasions that are at church, and we invite them, and they're willing to come because I think since we have built the rapport outside and have shown them that we honor ...that we help them find a mosque, where they could go worship.

I think that the fear that she had at first was that this was... she didn't say she feared it, but she said she wondered, "Is this group, a group of Christians whose aim is to evangelize and convert... is there an expectation that we become Christians if we take their help. When that was alleviated, I think that has helped."⁴⁷⁶

⁴⁷³ Jean.

⁴⁷⁴ Judy.

⁴⁷⁵ Andrea.

⁴⁷⁶ Alicia.

Changes through Volunteering and Coaching

Many survey respondents wrote about increased compassion, concern, and empathy for newcomers, often generalizing to the wider issues around immigration, refugees, and asylum seekers.

I have become much more empathetic to the plight of refugees. I better understand and have more compassion for the issues around immigration and refugees. I am much more sympathetic to refugees as well as anyone who has to negotiate our system of social services and immigration regulations. I have a better understanding and respect for refugees. I have a deeper understanding of, and pride for, those seeking asylum. Deeper understanding of others from another culture, religion and what they have gone through to be free in the USA.⁴⁷⁷

Others focused on their personal relationship with the family.

Direct connection with our family was a highlight of 2022. Grateful for their friendship...relationship with a new family. Mostly gratefulness for learning other faiths and cultures. I am very grateful to have the Afghan families and individuals in my life. They have made Winona a better place.⁴⁷⁸

Linda's Home Team enjoyed a close relationship with the newcomer family, speaking of them as friends.

I like them very much when we get together...they're very hospitable people, they seem very grateful for everything that we've done. They don't, other than these relatives that they have, seem to socialize with anybody else except for us, and so I think we are their friendship group. We try to go, and just speak, practice their English. I helped the mom find a sewing machine...and I took her over to the fabric store and that kind of stuff, and just trying to do some things like you do with a friend.⁴⁷⁹

When coaches were asked how they had grown or changed through their work with HFR, some spoke of growing in advocacy.

One of my heart's passion is to grow and more in the area of advocacy. So that's also a new role...just hearing families' stories helps me to appeal to the lawmakers...they have the black and white facts, the statistics, whereas like, I have the personal story.

⁴⁷⁷ Survey responses.

⁴⁷⁸ Survey responses.

⁴⁷⁹ Linda.

So, walking with my families, hearing their stories helps me understand them better, but helps me to try to help the lawmakers to also understand... refugee families better. And that maybe some programs actually don't help.⁴⁸⁰

I had hardly touched community organizing and advocacy prior to my work at HFR, and my studies helped ...because my degree is very focused on community organizing and advocacy. I have learned what it is to advocate on behalf of others, lift up and amplify the voices of others... sit down when you need to.⁴⁸¹

Alicia had grown personally in working through her identity as an Asian American woman in conflict.

There's certain perceptions about Asian Americans, that we're quiet or submissive, especially women, and also growing up in the church. I'm more blunt, which is something that is not common, especially for Asian women. In fact, my mom would always tell me, "You be quiet."

But I still struggle with having certain conversations, especially confrontations... one of my goals professionally was to have more space to have those kinds of conversations. It was also a spiritual growth goal for me just to have those hard conversations. And oh... be careful what you want. Because I've had, oh so many times where I've had to be more vocal and talk about hard things.

Also navigating different situations with the family... learning about their culture. It also helps me learn about myself, like why I do what I do.⁴⁸²

Maddie, who had lived in Tijuana before working for HFR, spoke of a hopefulness in community after being separated during COVID.

It's called community sponsorship... we have this capacity to do this, let's do this. It's not just a flashy program. It's not necessarily the easiest thing to do. But it's not a super hard thing to do...

I know that there were so many people who came in after the war in Korea or the Vietnam War, and there was a lot of sponsorship, which looked different back then...but there's families or churches that sponsored families to come over and to live in safety.

And I think this is kind of that reawakening in the modern world, and even in the world post COVID... That's just been a really interesting and beautiful thing to experience after kind of being desensitized...the sense of community had kind of dwindled, and now I think it's something that is like awakening again...realizing we can trust each other. We can work together. We have this common goal which is something ...that's so beautiful and good.⁴⁸³

⁴⁸⁰ Alixia.

⁴⁸¹ Austin.

⁴⁸² Alixia.

⁴⁸³ Maddie.

Elena gained perspective on her own struggles and challenges as she worked closely with families who remained hopeful.

...everything that the families go through to be able to reach safety and just knowing what the day-to-day is like for them and how they're able to leave everything behind and still have this joy or be happy when you come into their home...(and how they are) very hopeful about the future has been something that just really changed the way that I see the things that are problems to me. Of course, everyone has issues in life, but just seeing the bigger picture of how these people can go through major loss and still come out on the other side and remain... hopeful and just looking towards the future. I just wish you didn't have that resilience, but at the same time, I admire that. Yeah, everything that you do and you still have kept that softness.⁴⁸⁴

Austin gained a deeper understanding of God's mission and his place in participating in that mission.

I think it's dramatically changed the way that I look at mission, God's mission. It's changed the way that I've seen how I navigate through this world as a believer, in how I represent and reflect God...then just in my faith and my more mature understanding of what mission really means and what it means to kind of participate in that mission. And how that can ...dictate what you do on a daily basis.⁴⁸⁵

Eric, the Communications Coordinator, was also coaching teams. He had been working for HFR for four and a half months when we had our interview and had no prior experience with refugee resettlement.

I knew refugees existed...and I've had friends...mostly Vietnamese, or Cambodian friends who were refugees, but I never really have asked them about that...mostly because most of them were way young when they actually came... it's more of their family.

So, it's been eye-opening to see how this world works and the actual struggles that the refugee families go through, how hard it is. I always had an abstract conception of how hard it has to be, but to see the reality of the situation.⁴⁸⁶

⁴⁸⁴ Elena.

⁴⁸⁵ Austin.

⁴⁸⁶ Eric.

Overall, coaches, who were mostly in their twenties and beginning their professional careers, talked more about ways that they had grown or changed than volunteers, many of whom were retired.

And Beyond

It was interesting telling my family... that we'll be with them for a year, and the mom said, "What? And then what?" and I said, "And then we're friends. We just get together as friends."⁴⁸⁷

Out of thirty-three volunteer participants, twenty-eight sponsored in 2022, and most had not yet finished the team year. Of the four who had sponsored in previous years, three were interviewed. Jean had volunteered with two teams, and then became a volunteer coach before becoming an employee. The other two were also still in relationship with the families.

At the end of our interview, Lisa, from the Indiana Sponsor Circle, asked me about my research, and I explained the growth of community sponsorship. She said,

It sounds like it's going to take more people who are just, you know, Joe and Jane citizens, like us, coming together. And so, I'm trying to think if our circle is just a very smart group of people who (are) sort of fearless to figure things out.

It's gonna require... education and lots of education, and success stories, showing people success stories that Sponsorship Circles can work, and then getting over the people like me who think, "Oh, we're not professionals. We don't really know what we're doing."

But we all have different sets: skill sets. and education, and experience and gifting from God. It's been... a faith-building thing for me to see all those things come together. And in a successful way too, to come alongside a family and see them resettle.⁴⁸⁸

⁴⁸⁷ Carol.

⁴⁸⁸ Lisa.

Chapter Six: Conclusion

This case study examined the development and practice of HFR's Home Team program from 2017 to 2022. Research focused on identifying the following: external and internal factors that led to HFR's current recruitment, training, and coaching models; how HFR came to its current practices; how coaches and volunteers experienced recruitment, training, and coaching; challenges faced by volunteers and how HFR aided them; and the interplay between individuals, teams, and an organization being called, bearing the cost, and experiencing the blessing of the practice of hospitality to newcomers. This conclusion reflects on this practice in light of a theology of hospitality, discusses findings in view of the literature, and gives practical implications and recommendations for volunteers welcoming newcomers as a practice for the church.

Conclusions and Recommendations

External Factors

Immigration Tensions and Restrictions

Minda Schweizer began her work with volunteer teams as the Syrian crisis and Muslim terrorism in the US and Europe led simultaneously to public goodwill to welcome refugees and a rise in anti-immigration sentiment. HFR was founded and grew in proximity to people seeking asylum at the US/Mexico border and a reduction of resettlement capacity in local agencies. A rise in anti-immigration sentiment followed the Obama Administration's pledge to welcome 10,000 Syrian refugees after the public surge of empathy following the viral photograph of a

Syrian child who had drowned. The election of Donald Trump led to the implementation of policies restricting immigration, with a pause and then progressive decrease in the number of refugees brought in each year and the “zero-tolerance policy” at the US/Mexico border, which led to children being separated from their parents. Pro-immigration public action and advocacy included work to reunite families and ongoing work at the border by churches and NGOs. Through worldwide, nationwide, and regional shifts, HFR stayed focused on responding to needs through volunteer teams and building capacity.

Rebuilding Policies and Afghan and Ukraine

The Biden Administration pledged to rebuild the refugee resettlement program, committing to increase the resettlement ceiling, expand community sponsorship, and develop new public-private partnerships to pilot private resettlement. With the fall of Kabul and the evacuation of Afghan allies, the administration launched Sponsor Circles for Afghans, in which groups of five could sponsor an Afghan family. Response was positive, and HFR coached 60 Sponsor Circles who sponsored 250 Afghan individuals.⁴⁸⁹ When Russia invaded Ukraine, Sponsor Circles for Ukraine launched. Welcome Corps launched in January of 2023, opening a permanent way for groups to privately sponsor refugees.

Because of HFR’s involvement in networks, the organization played a key role in the development and implementation of Sponsor Circles. There are echoes of the beginnings of Canada’s private sponsorship program in the surge of interest and support for Afghan Sponsor Circles in the US. Canada’s Immigration Law of 1976 contained a provision for private

⁴⁸⁹ Austin.

sponsorship that changed in scope when the Indochine crisis and a change of political leadership led to a commitment to resettle a large number of Indochine refugees.

Outside Organizations and Funding

Organizations and networks developed to support and encourage sponsorship. The Global Refugee Sponsorship Initiative (GRSI) began in 2016, providing training, technical support and capacity-building for community sponsorship programs.⁴⁹⁰ In the US, the Community Sponsorship Hub (CSH) was established in 2021 and partnered with the US State department in launching Sponsor Circles for Afghans.

Funding and support through new networks of private organizations with a focus on community sponsorship increased HFR's capacity in 2021 and 2022. CSH's Catalyst Fund granted \$100,000 to aid in the development of HFR's sponsorship programs. In January of 2021, the Hello Neighbor Network chose Minda and fifteen other nonprofit leaders working with immigrants to participate in its 10-month leadership program. In June, HFR received a capacity-building grant from the organization. Welcome.us, a non-profit initiative, launched in September of 2022 to help with private sector support for arriving Afghans. HFR became a part of the Welcome.us Coalition soon after. Outside networks and funding equipped HFR as it expanded the reach of volunteer teams.

Summary of External Factors

External factors of world events, public sentiment, changes in policy during the Trump and then Biden Administrations, and the development of private foundations and structures to

⁴⁹⁰ Smith, Craig Damian, 2020, "A Model for the World? Policy Transfer Theory and the Challenges to "Exporting" Private Sponsorship to Europe," In *Strangers to Neighbors: Refugee Sponsorship in Context*, edited by Shauna Labman and Geoffrey Cameron: McGill-Queens University Press, 286.

support the development of organizations working with community sponsorship all contributed to HFR's beginnings and growth as an organization.

Internal Factors

Vision

HFR began with Minda Schweizer's vision of involving volunteer teams to welcome newcomer families in their first year in the US. Because of that vision, she expanded HFR's work from Home Teams for refugees resettled through resettlement agencies to teams for asylum seekers. When needs arose, whether a sudden arrival of one asylum-seeking family or the arrival of twenty-nine families at the border, Minda said yes, staying focused on her vision of a volunteer team for every newcomer while often quickly adjusting to changing situations.

When opportunities arose that were outside of her vision, Minda chose to partner with other agencies who provided those services. When funding or organizational capacity did not allow for additional families, Minda was able to say no, for example, capping HFR's acceptance of Sponsor Circles when funding for staffing the program reached its limit.

Partnerships

Beginning with World Relief and a network of Presbyterian churches, HFR developed partnerships with those working in resettlement in Southern California. HFR was an active member of the Refugee Coalition, taking on the planning of World Refugee day in 2020, a year when the celebration was held online due to COVID-19. Through these partnerships, outside organizations sought out HFR's help in resettling newcomers, both refugees and asylum-seekers in Southern California.

Learning from others

HFR sought out information and guidance from others writing about or practicing community sponsorship. When the pressures of finances and increasing demand for teams grew, Minda researched other agencies to discover how they funded their programs. One grant was given specifically to enable HFR to work with a resettlement agency so both agencies could learn how to better partner, positioning HFR to work with nationwide resettlement agencies as community sponsorship grows throughout the US. This consistent posture of learning contributed to HFR's processes and systems changing over time, allowing for growth in the capacity and health of the organization.

Systems

Many of HFR's staff are organizational thinkers, self-described as enjoying structure and systems. Minda built systems and adjusted procedures gradually to improve the way newcomers were welcomed by their teams. Structures and systems also developed quickly in response to sudden needs, like the Family Reunification Project, COVID-19, and the Afghan crisis. In 2022, when volunteer teams and staff increased quickly, structures were put in place to ensure quality supervision and ongoing staff training.

Community

HFR's belief in teams going to their community for resources and help, a key part of transformational development, is also the way HFR has functioned as an organization. The active social media presence that told stories and brought needs before the online community expanded the circle of care around newcomers.

Staffing

HFR's practices in the workplace involved close supervision of staff. While in the beginning years Minda met individually with coaches, as the staff grew, coaches were promoted to supervisory positions. Though some aspects of resettlement were similar for all newcomers, accompanying a family with particular needs and access to resources call for this kind of close supervision and teamwork. Supervision was sometimes pastoral, with coaches helping with work life balance and the emotional challenge of accompanying newcomers who have experienced trauma.

Staff had opportunities for advancement within HFR and professional development. Many represented HFR in both regional and national networks and considered their increasing involvement in advocacy as a source of satisfaction. As they advanced, each staff member continued coaching teams, so the center of HFR's work, equipping volunteer teams who welcomed newcomers, remained the focus.

Summary of Internal Factors

Minda had a vision of volunteer teams to welcome newcomer families. She sought out local partnerships, information, and guidance as she learned about the wider networks of community sponsorship. Many HFR staff were organizationally-minded, able to create and thrive in structure while maintaining a flexible and empathetic posture with teams and newcomers. A strong emphasis on the principles of transformational development led the organization, both in the way they functioned organization-wide and as they coached teams. Ongoing training and opportunities for advancement were in place, so staff had the opportunity for professional development.

Recruiting, Training, and Coaching

From Personal Contact to Nation-wide Networking

HFR's initial recruitment was through word of mouth within the Presbyterian presbytery in Southern California. Minda then networked with other faith groups, like the Jewish coalition and other Christian denominations. With the Family Reunification project, recruitment by HFR and World Relief transitioned to online informational meetings, which continued through the Afghan and Ukraine crisis.

Most volunteers heard about HFR through their faith communities and friendship circles. In 2017 and 2018, Minda networked and partnered in local faith communities to recruit teams. Most coaches experienced recruitment as potential teams coming to them, with the exception being the informational sessions for Ukrainian sponsors that were less successful than previous online sessions for Afghan allies. HFR is now moving towards networking with nationwide groups, like the Sisters of Saint Joseph, who have a wide network of parishes and a commitment to welcoming newcomers.

In recruiting for an intensive year of hands-on volunteer work, HFR adapted quickly when there was a surge in need and interest in volunteers for Afghan allies. Several team leaders or key team members found out about the opportunity and recruited within their faith community. Ultimately, whether through face-to-face or online informational sessions that allowed for question and answer and follow-up personal communication, conversation and weeks of communication while teams came together were involved in the recruitment process.

Volunteers named a desire to help and empathy as main motivations. The practical information about requirements, especially financial, as teams were required to raise funds for

the newcomers and for HFR's coaching, was a major factor as teams formed. Increasingly, faith communities funded the costs, releasing the team from the need to fundraise.

Training

Initial training was based on World Relief's Good Neighbor Teams. Three sessions covered an overview of the resettlement path for newcomers, issues of culture and transformational development, and working through the care plan and assigning team roles. HFR added a session on fundraising when teams began fundraising for the family's needs and later, HFR's coaching as well as an emphasis on team flexibility.

During training, coaches emphasized this importance of flexibility, expecting the unexpected, and the principles of transformational development. As these ideas and principles were new to most team members, coaches saw it as a foundation for conversations that they would return to throughout the team year.

Summary of Training

The care plan, the working document for teams throughout the year, and the descriptions and assignments of team roles were key aspects of training and preparation. Principles of transformational development were new to most respondents. Training changed little over time, and though necessary, it was the ongoing coaching in real time that equipped volunteers.

Coaching

Coaching was initially informal and face-to-face as Minda met with the teams and responded with resources as needs came up. As the organization grew, the process became more formal. Typically, a coach trained and coached their Home Teams. Coaches met with the team weekly in the first weeks after the newcomers' arrival and then moved to monthly meetings.

Team meetings consisted of working through the care plan and addressing challenges. HFR had two debriefing sessions in the team year, at six and eleven months, to allow for deeper reflection by the team on the experience.

In addition to regular meetings with the team, coaches maintained open channels through Work Place, emails, and phone calls. Coaches, the team, and newcomers communicated through WhatsApp. Coaches found resources, gave practical advice, stepped in when team members were unable, provided perspective, emotional support, debriefing opportunities, and coached towards transformational development. They coached towards relationships of mutuality and friendship even as the work of the team was often centered on accomplishing tasks. Coaches celebrated milestones with families and teams, including the end of the year celebration, where the photos and videos from the team year were shared. Coaches received guidance from their supervisors and worked through issues at staff meetings.

Volunteers expressed appreciation for the ongoing involvement, guidance, and encouragement of their coaches. In the beginning weeks, teams relied on coaches as they navigated social services, medical care, and immigration procedures. When state procedures and information were still developing to adjust to Sponsor Circles, volunteers and coaches worked together to navigate and inform organizations and departments. Several mentioned the importance of perspective, knowing that other teams and newcomers were experiencing similar challenges. Teams where members struggled with transformational development or had members not fulfilling their responsibilities leaned on coaches to direct conversations and solve problems together, perhaps reducing friction within the team.

Summary of Coaching

In his study of the mental health of Indochine refugees, Beiser found that private sponsors often focused on short-term support over building relationships of trust to help with long-term integration.⁴⁹¹ HFR's coaching used principles of transformational development to coach volunteers towards friendship and mutuality that potentially mitigated this risk.

The current situation of large numbers of sponsors with no previous experience is similar to the situation with Kosovar sponsorship in Canada in 1999. HFR's coaching addressed the need for ongoing support and supervision named by a study on sponsorship of Kosovar refugees in Northern Alberta, where sponsors experienced challenges in expectations and a lack of support. Their recommendations were that sponsors receive ongoing support, training, and regular debriefing. These are all provided in HFR's coaching of teams.⁴⁹²

Challenges faced by Home Teams face and HFR's aid

Housing

At the beginning of the team year, finding housing and navigating social services were the main concerns and critical issues for teams. HFR encouraged teams to reach out to friends or community contacts who were landlords and to find housing that newcomers could afford once they had work. In Southern California, affordable housing was particularly difficult to find, and the distance between the team and the newcomer family was a challenge for many teams. This responsibility was a key point of stress for those teams that were responsible for housing.

⁴⁹¹ Beiser, Morton, 1999, *Strangers at the Gate: The "Boat People's" First Ten Years in Canada*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 121.

⁴⁹² Mulder and Derwing, "The Kosovar Sponsoring Experience in Northern Alberta," 235.

Social Services

Navigating social services was new for most teams, and HFR provided a plan for the order and timeline for enrolling in programs. Enrollment was especially challenging as Afghans and Ukrainians arrived under humanitarian parole or under Special Immigrant Visas, and state administrative offices were sometimes not up to date on changes and eligibility. Coaches and team members worked together to inform offices and work through enrollment challenges. Those working with a resettlement agency through community sponsorship had the support of a resettlement case manager. Though some of the challenges with health and education are likely to be ongoing, some were particular to the rapid implementation of the Sponsor Circle program and lack of communication between entities.

Jobs

Several teams named aiding newcomers in finding jobs as a challenge, some expressing concern about newcomers being underemployed. Teams leaned on their networks, helped with resumés, financially supported extra training, or made connections with potential employers. There was a tension between the need to find work quickly and the desire to see newcomers engaged in fulfilling work that fit their skillset and background.

Communication and Relationship

The communication and relationship between the team and newcomers depended on a variety of factors, including language, distance, personality, and time constraints. Some teams struggled with when newcomers had seemingly overwhelming needs while other teams felt that they were not needed. Training and coaching that emphasized adjusting to the unexpected helped teams work through unmet expectations, and coaches encouraged their teams towards friendship with newcomers.

Commitment

Coaches and volunteers cited team members not fulfilling their commitment as a challenge. There were a variety of reasons, from expectations and motivations to busyness and life circumstances. In some cases, coaches gave encouragement or worked during team meetings to guide members in follow-through. In cases where a team wasn't sustainable, outside people stepped in to help.

In a study on the volunteer experience of befriending programs with refugees in Canada, sponsors remained committed when their tasks were meaningful, feasible, and related to their interests.⁴⁹³ Though HFR worked with teams during training on dividing team roles according to interest and skills, what was actually needed by newcomers depended on their situation. Though respondents spoke of their involvement being meaningful, there were several instances of volunteers not participating in the ways they had expected and adjusting their expectations to the reality of the family's situation and capacity.

Transformational Development

Principles of transformational development were a key challenge for coaches as they counseled teams towards reflection and group decision-making when needs arose. Coaches trained and revisited these principles throughout the year, addressing issues and debriefing. Coaches reminded teams that they were working towards the newcomers having deeper ties to the community with a support system beyond the team.

⁴⁹³ Behnia, "An Exploratory Study of Befriending Programs with Refugees," 15.

Summary of Addressing Challenges

In a study on the experience of sponsors, newcomers, and resettlement agencies in Alberta, Canada, many Syrian newcomers felt that sponsors did not offer them sufficient opportunities to act independently and often doubted their skills and capacity.⁴⁹⁴ The study, which was done during a period of time with a high volume of sponsors who were moved by the plight of Syrian refugees and had little experience in resettlement, noted that experience of newcomers varied according to sponsors' commitment, experience, and understanding of challenges faced by those resettling.⁴⁹⁵ A study on the potential for volunteers to be a catalyst for newcomer integration called for careful selection and clear expectations, in-depth training, and maintenance of open channels for feedback.⁴⁹⁶

For HFR, clear information during recruitment and training communicated the high level of commitment throughout the year, and the significant financial and time requirement may help in having volunteers with a high level of commitment. The intensive coaching helped volunteers make up for the lack of experience of current volunteers. Training addressed the refugee journey, and as volunteers accompanied newcomers, they became intimately acquainted with the challenges.

Calling, Cost, and Blessing

As mentioned above, the majority of staff and volunteers named empathy and a desire to help as key motivations in deciding to engage in this work. As a small organization with a tight focus, volunteer teams welcoming newcomers, the purposes of staff and volunteers were in

⁴⁹⁴ Agrawal, "Canadian Refugee Sponsorship Programs," 953.

⁴⁹⁵ Agrawal, "Canadian Refugee Sponsorship Programs," 959.

⁴⁹⁶ Dorst and Fratzke, "Volunteers and Sponsors?" 11.

alignment, even when there were differences about best ways to proceed. In the majority of interviews, volunteers had a learner posture and a respect for HFR's procedures, expressing appreciation for the support, both logistical and emotional. Staff were highly motivated and capable and were involved with both teams and families through communication platforms and face-to-face, especially in key moments like arrivals and celebrations. Many volunteers and staff named an emotional cost of hospitality with those who are struggling, telling stories of past and current hardships that newcomers faced and empathizing with them. Coaches and volunteers shared celebrations and victories with newcomers throughout the year, ending with the end of the year celebration.

A 2003 study on the benefits of sponsorship to newcomers and sponsors found that sponsors gained empathy as they saw and experienced the challenges faced by newcomers.⁴⁹⁷ Empathy was a key theme for both volunteers and coaches, with several narratives of volunteers experiencing challenges alongside newcomers and identifying with them.

Home Teams as Christian Hospitality

The Call

Those seeking refuge are often strangers in every sense. As they rebuild their lives, they need connection to community, structures, and systems that lead to flourishing in their new communities. The work of coming alongside their journey is best done in relationships that are beyond what a caseworker or a program can do. It is human work, and it is sometimes difficult.

Throughout the history, the call of the church is to embody the hospitality of God in its particular place. For American Christians, community sponsorship of newcomers is one way to

⁴⁹⁷ Treviranus and Casasola, "Canada's Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program," 183.

hold our households and communities with an open hand, recognizing that they are gifts from God to be shared as we welcome those seeking refuge.

In Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, he calls followers to be a light on a hill through their countercultural actions of love and mercy. Hospitality practiced outside the walls of the church in partnership with those who come from different backgrounds is one way of being a light. We live in a time when many have an abundance; perhaps this kind of costly hospitality, where we give not only of our finances but of ourselves in a relationship that is complicated, where we have things to learn, would grow us in humility and Christ-likeness.

Implications and Recommendations

In light of the research, the following implications and recommendations are for faith groups and HFR in the areas of partnering, volunteer advocates, finances, and *kenosis*.

Partnering

It sounds like it's going to take more people who are just, you know, Joe and Jane citizens, like us, coming together. It's gonna require... education and lots of education, and success stories, showing people success stories that Sponsorship Circles can work, and then getting over the people like me who think, "Oh, we're not professionals. We don't really know what we're doing."⁴⁹⁸

This research has described situations where empathy led to welcoming actions by individuals, groups, and communities. Working with newcomers as they make their home in the US is a complicated matter. Some challenges involve paperwork and government processes that change based on national or state policies. Others are relational, with teams with vast differences in culture interacting with newcomers who have often endured trauma. Those who feel empathy and a desire to help the marginalized or poor may idealize the relationship or eventually be

⁴⁹⁸ Lisa.

overwhelmed. In Minda's words, ““It gets complicated when you're in a helper...relationship. It could end in hurt feelings, and then you don't want to do it ever again.”⁴⁹⁹ Wise and informed supervision of teams is critical as opportunities and interest in sponsorship expand to ensure that teams have access to resources and are equipped to walk with newcomers in ways that are supportive and aid them in developing connections to their community.

Partnering with organizations, like HFR, that have empathy, capacity, relationships, and history is important to avoid harm. Individual churches and denominational structures should coordinate with these organizations and formalize relationships and partnerships that allow for individuals and congregations to be informed, supported, and equipped in welcoming newcomers with the support of their church body.

HFR should pursue and expand relationships and partnerships with denominational structures and organizations in the same way that they have built their network of partnerships in Southern California. Their work nationwide up until now has focused on recruiting individuals and teams, especially as the Afghan and Ukrainian crisis were urgent needs. Developing and nurturing networks and relationships will build capacity within the wider church to enter into welcoming work in healthy ways.

Volunteer Advocates

Working with the local government is really difficult. Just because not everybody's trained the same way in every state. And then in every county, some counties...have... less access to resources, some counties have less training, less staffing. ...That's been hard.⁵⁰⁰

⁴⁹⁹ Minda.

⁵⁰⁰ Maddie.

Indiana was doing things differently than California, and we were kind of the first... it was just different than other states... the sequencing, and the services available, and how to get those.⁵⁰¹

Housing, navigating social services, and finding jobs were challenging for many teams, and HFR's coaches gave advice and found resources when possible, but as community sponsorship expands, especially in communities without a history and pattern of resettlement, these practical matters will continue to be a challenge

HFR should develop advocates and resource people who have volunteered to be resources for new volunteers and teams. As volunteers work through establishing systems and navigating services, their experiences and knowledge can serve as a resource for those within their state. HFR should identify potential advocates and explore ways work together as a volunteer network grows.

These advocates may also be a part of storytelling and education not only within their immediate community but in their wider networks.

Finances

It's the money part. Finding out...that we're going to be responsible for whatever group we get for two years, one shape or form somehow, you know, or if they run out of money, you know, and then I'm retired...So that could be, you know, a financial burden on everybody. So that kind of worried me.⁵⁰²

When the Canadian government gave a provision for private sponsorship in 1976, the full financial liability for the individual and dependents was a barrier for those interested in sponsorship. Mennonite Central Committee of Canada's negotiation with the government to

⁵⁰¹ Andrea.

⁵⁰² Robert, speaking about the financial commitment to resettling Ukrainians through the Sponsor Circle program.

become the first Sponsorship Agreement Holder (SAH) enabled them to accept liability and screen local groups in their congregations.⁵⁰³

The financial cost of sponsorship and/or burden of liability was a named concern for some respondents. Increasingly, churches were paying for fundraising costs, yet the financial liability that is taken on with private sponsorship is likely to be a barrier. Faith institutions, whether individual churches or denominations, could take on the financial liability and aid in funding to remove a barrier for those interested in private sponsorship.

As HFR pursues partnerships, they should address funding realities by establishing MOUs and agreements that provide the funding needed to sustain its programs and meet newcomer needs.

Kenosis

I think it's dramatically changed the way that I look at mission, God's mission. It's changed the way that I've seen how I navigate through this world as a believer, in how I represent and reflect God...then just in my faith and my more mature understanding of what mission really means and what it means to kind of participate in that mission.⁵⁰⁴

Care for newcomers encompasses immediate needs for housing, work, education, and healthcare, which can often seem all-encompassing. Other factors leading to integration include opportunities for learning culture and language and building relationships within a community. In these ways, transformational development overlaps with the UK's Indicators for Integration, which considers both the newcomer becoming more like the host community and how host communities adapt in response to the newcomer.⁵⁰⁵

⁵⁰³ Janzen, "The 1979 MCC Canada Master Agreement for the Sponsorship of Refugees," 222.

⁵⁰⁴ Austin.

⁵⁰⁵ Stansbury, "Global Literature Synthesis Report," 5.

Living in proximity and community with those on the margins often calls for an emptying of ourselves, a *kenosis*, and is work that may not have the short-term results that we hope to see. Individuals and congregations entering into these relationships need support that is patient and persistent over time. Congregational leaders should develop and nurture a perspective that sees long-term hospitality as a practice that reflects the mercy and compassion of God regardless of short-term outcomes and provide pastoral care and support to those involved in hospitality.

HFR's recruiting has been based on framing the needs at hand and the responsibility involved. As they move beyond this period of urgency with Afghan and Ukrainian resettlement, they should communicate the call to hospitality and *kenosis* as a way of following the way of Jesus in their communication with churches, giving a richer foundation to this work.

Recommendations for Further Research

Longitudinal research through the lens of newcomers, in particular the many who arrived from Afghanistan and Ukraine, should be done to study the impact of sponsorship on the long-term adjustment of these newcomers. Hearing their voices, in particular once they are beyond the beginning years of adjustment, can lead to further insights on the effect of sponsorship, pointing to positive and negative ways sponsors impacted these arrivals. Though research on Canadian sponsorship points to positive outcomes, Canada's social service network is more centralized, so teams in the US carried a greater burden in signing up newcomers for services and navigating social service systems.

HFR leaned heavily on a transformational development model in their training and coaching. This model guided how teams handled financial and material needs in ways that were intended to respect and encourage newcomers' independence. Research to compare team and/or

newcomer experiences with teams working under a transformational development model and those who were not could determine if there are positive long-term effects for all involved.

Conclusion

HFR's presence and work has brought blessing and flourishing to the volunteers and communities involved in community sponsorship. The emphasis on the dignity of each person, trust in the welcome of communities, and welcome of volunteers and newcomers from any background has led to wise welcome and community flourishing. As community sponsorship grows in the US, listening to and learning from the narratives of those who have practiced walking with newcomers can inform and encourage hospitality to the stranger.

Epilogue

“When a foreigner resides among you in your land, do not mistreat them. The foreigner residing among you must be treated as your native-born. Love them as yourself, for you were foreigners in Egypt. I am the Lord your God.”

Lev. 19:33-34 (NIV)

“Just the thought of having to be forced from my home...how traumatic that would be, and how beneficial it would be to have a welcoming team to help to welcome me into a new country.”

Minda Schweizer⁵⁰⁶

The plane lands. The newcomer family walks out of baggage claim. The Home Team is there with children holding handmade signs, “We love our new neighbors, Welcome Home!” People smile, shake hands. They are all cautious with one another, knowing there are deep cultural differences. They travel together to the newcomers’ apartment when they eat a meal, prepared by a woman who arrived years ago and has a catering business. Some of the children play together with some Matchbox cars. A couple of children are sprawled out on the rug, coloring together. One team member arranges to come by the next day to go to fill out necessary paperwork. Another offers to go to the Halal market when they are ready. And so it begins.

⁵⁰⁶ Minda Schweizer and Austin interview with author, March 2, 2022.

Appendix A

Consent Form⁵⁰⁷

My name is Michelle Harris, and I am a student at Kairos University. I am conducting research for my Doctor of Theology dissertation. My phone number is 260-297-8287, and my email is michelleshappellharris@gmail.com. Please contact me if you have questions about this study. Faculty Advisor for this study is Dr. Anthony Blair, Kairos University (ablair@kairos.edu).

Purpose: The purpose of this research is to study the development and practice of Home for Refugees' Home Team program.

Procedure: I am asking you to agree to participate in either an individual interview lasting not more than 30 minutes or a focus group lasting no more than 90 minutes.

Audio Recordings I will record the interview and then transcribe the audio using transcription software. I will delete the recording after editing the transcription.

Voluntary participation: Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. If you choose to participate in an individual or focus group interview and then change your mind, you may stop participating. You do not need to offer an explanation.

Risks and confidentiality: The only known risk may be emotional as sponsorship involves up-close relationship and involvement with people coming from traumatic and complicated situations. Interviews could bring up disappointment, unmet expectations, and frustrations with participants' involvement in sponsorship.

The researcher will not collect any identifying information besides consent forms which will be kept separate from other research materials. If I quote something said from the interview in the dissertation or future publication, I will use a pseudonym rather than an actual name.

Possible benefits include a space to reflect on the experience and knowledge that you are contributing to a study intended to inform and expand the practice of sponsorship in the U.S.

Disposition of Consent Forms: I will retain copies of consent forms three years after completion of the research.

By signing this form, you agree to participate in this research project with all the conditions noted above.

Participants' signature _____ Date _____

Researcher's signature _____ Date _____

⁵⁰⁷ Adapted from template, Timothy D. Lincoln, 2021, *Qualitative Research: A Field Manual for Ministry Students*. Chicago: Atlas Open Press, 311-312.

Appendix B

Consent for Survey⁵⁰⁸

As a former or current Home Team participant with Home for Refugees, you are being asked to participate in a research study whose purpose is to investigate the development and practice of Home for Refugees' Home Team program. Specifically, you are invited to complete a 15 question online short-answer questionnaire. Feel free to give either short answers or longer explanations—whatever you prefer!

The questions ask for reflection on how experience of sponsorship with Home for Refugees. If you feel uncomfortable in answering, simply stop and close the browser window. All information you provide will be used for research purposes only. Any identifying information about you will be removed in any reports. The research data for this study will be stored in a pass-word protected location on secure computer networks.

I consent to participate in this study.

⁵⁰⁸ Adapted from: Lincoln, *Qualitative Research*, 95.

Appendix C

HFR Home Team Survey

1. Gender
2. Age
3. Education
4. Marital status
5. State of Residence
6. Faith tradition
7. Which languages are you capable of speaking fluently? (Check all that apply)
8. Year (s) that you sponsored through Home for Refugees.
 - 2017
 - 2018
 - 2019
 - 2020
 - 2021
 - 2022
9. How long were you/ have you been a sponsor?[1] [2]
10. How did you hear about HFRs home teams?
11. What motivated you to be a part of a home team?
12. What was your role on the home team?
13. What preparation by HFR did you participate in before the arrival of sponsored individual/family?
14. What aspects of preparation were new and/or helpful?
15. What do you wish you had been prepared for but weren't?
16. What contact did you and your team have from HFR during the sponsorship period?
17. What [3] [4] is a challenge you experienced as an individual or team?
18. How did HFR equip you to work through challenges?
19. What do you wish they had done to equip you to work through the challenges?
20. How have you changed through this experience of sponsorship?
21. Why would you recommend the experience to others and/or why would you not recommend it?
22. Would you and/or your group be willing to take part in a 30-45-minute online Zoom meeting to more fully tell about your experience of being on a Home Team through Home for Refugees? If so, please provide your name and email.

Appendix D

Interview Protocol Home Team Participant⁵⁰⁹

Case Study of HFR's Sponsorship Programs

DATE:

TIME AND PLACE:

INTERVIEWER: MICHELLE HARRIS

INTERVIEWEE:

OTHER:

Pre-interview Information and procedure

Introduction: Introduce self, review process for session, 30-45-minute interview, and general format for questions.

Study purpose and applications:

Review study's purpose: investigate the development and practice of Home for Refugees' Home Team program through a case study approach to encourage the practice and expansion of community sponsorship in the United States.

Uses of findings: published as a doctoral thesis with potential in the future for other avenues of publication

Consent forms, approvals: Acknowledgment of content of consent forms distributed to the participant, assurance of privacy/confidentiality/anonymity as appropriate, questions answered, note that the interview will be recorded and then transcribed. Audio and video deleted after verification of transcription.

Treatment of data: Data will be depersonalized (names changed) and stored on my password-protected computer and external hard drive for the duration of dissertation writing and follow-up publications.

Other questions or concerns?

Opening the Interview Session

Introductory Questions:

Q1: Introductory Question—Confirm from survey length of time and when involved in sponsorship.

Q2: Introductory Question—What had your involvement been with newcomers before sponsorship?

⁵⁰⁹ Adapted from a template from Felice D. Billups, 2021. *Qualitative Data Collection Tools: Design, Development, and Applications*. Qualitative Research Methods Series. vol. volume 55. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications, Inc, 50-51.

Key Interview Questions

Q3: Content: You said in the survey....tell me more about your process of finding out about sponsorship and deciding to do it.

Probes: Motivations/how heard of HFR/how group formed

Q4: Content: You said...on survey about orientation/training, tell me more about how you experienced the training, what was memorable...

Probes— Zoom/in person/What was new for you? What was helpful? What do you wish you had learned?

Q5: Content: You said...about your contact with HFR during sponsorship...confirm how often/with who.

Probes: What was the primary methods of interaction? (Workplace, phone calls, scheduled zooms, other)

Q6: Content: Tell a story of how HFR's coaching equipped you and/or your team to be a better sponsors.

Probes: More detail

Q6: Content: What are one or two stories of challenges you and/or your team faced during sponsorship?

Probes: What was interaction like with HFR through the challenges? Tell me about their input. What was helpful? What wasn't helpful.

Conclusion:

How do you describe your overall experience of sponsorship to others?
Why would you recommend or not recommend sponsorship to others?

Q7: Concluding Question:

Is there anything else you would like to tell me or share with me regarding today's topic?

Thank you and Follow-up Reminder

Thank you for your time and your insights on HFR's sponsorship program. I will be sending a follow-up questionnaire by email in the next few days.

Appendix E

Interview Protocol HFR Personnel⁵¹⁰

Case Study of HFR's Sponsorship Programs

DATE:

TIME AND PLACE:

INTERVIEWER:

INTERVIEWEE:

OTHER:

Pre-interview Information and procedure

Introduction: Introduce self, review process for session, 30-45 minutes, and general format for questions

Study purpose and applications:

Review study's purpose: investigate the development and practice of Home for Refugees' Home Team program through a case study approach to encourage the practice and expansion of community sponsorship in the United States.

Uses of findings: published as a doctoral thesis with potential in the future for other avenues of publication

Consent forms, approvals: Acknowledgment of content of consent forms distributed to participants, assurance of privacy/confidentiality/anonymity as appropriate, questions answered, note that the interview will be recorded and obtain permission for that.

Treatment of data: Data will be depersonalized (names changed) and stored on my password-protected computer and external hard drive for the duration of dissertation writing and follow-up publications.

Other questions or concerns?

Opening the Interview Session

Introductory Questions:

Q1: Introductory Question—How long have you worked with Home for Refugees?

Q2: Introductory Question—What's your role in HFR?

Key Interview Questions

Q3: Content: Tell me about how you came to work for HFR.

Probes: How did you hear about it/ Motivation/Prior experience with immigration

Q4: How have you been trained in your role?

⁵¹⁰ Adapted from a template from Felice D. Billups, 50-51.

Probes—Initial training/ongoing/content—If you have been on staff for a long time, have you seen changes over time in training?

Q5: Content: Tell about your work with teams/Sponsor circles from initial contact with teams, training, coaching, to ending

Probes——contact with team, regularity, modes of communication/ways that you adapt to team dynamics

Q6: Content: What common challenges do you find yourself working through with teams throughout the coaching period? Tell a story of working through a challenge with a team

Probes: Do challenges change over time? What challenges are common to all teams?

Q7: Tell a story of how you have grown or changed through your work with HFR.

Q8: Concluding Question:

Is there anything else you would like to tell me or share with me regarding today's topic?

Thank you and Follow-up Reminder

Thank you for your time and your insights on HFR's sponsorship program. I will be sending a follow-up questionnaire by email in the next few days.

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